

THE ARGOSY.

MARCH, 1883.

WINIFRED POWER.

CHAPTER VII.

WINIFRED.

TWENTY-FIVE years. It is a large span out of a lifetime; an age, seemingly, to look forward to or to look back upon. That period of time has nearly elapsed since the scenes recorded in our story, and the former chapters were but the prologue to what has now to come. Its thread is taken up in Paris; to which gay city we must carry the reader for a very brief sojourn.

Everybody who saw her for the first time was struck, not alone with Winifred Power's beauty, but also with her air of happiness. Not that she looked beaming, or facetious, or vacantly amused: nor was she perpetually laughing and talking. But she had an air of bright, resolute energy, which one instinctively felt could arise from no other source than a perfectly contented spirit. Her cordiality of manner; her fearless blue eyes; her quick blithe ways said plainly that in all her life she had given more of sympathy and help than she had needed.

Judgments, of course, differed about her as about everybody, but the majority of them were favourable. Among the weak, the poor, and the oppressed, indeed, Winifred counted a legion of friends. Not that people ever really disliked Winifred. Only some found her a little absolute, and others rather failed to understand her; and very sensitive, shallow, and vain persons thought occasionally that she had meant to affront them. Winifred was always dreadfully sorry when she discovered (which she did not always) that she had hurt anybody's feelings. But it is not certain that her sorrow was altogether conciliatory, for it had a slight mixture in its kindness of astonished, good-humoured, but faintly imperious scorn.

As a rule, it must be confessed Winifred had not very much time to trouble herself about people's feelings—as such. If they de-

manded consolation, sympathy, or active help (especially the latter), her energy indeed seemed as elastic as her leisure. But as long as those around her were satisfied, what she liked best of all was to have plenty of time for her painting.

For Miss Power was an artist, and no unsuccessful one for her years ; and the sums produced by her painting counted for something in the not always abundant family finances. Winifred lived in Paris with her uncle, Mr. Russell, and his wife. Upon the second marriage of his widowed sister in India, Mrs. Power, to Captain Chandos-Fane, the Russells had adopted the little girl, Winifred. Latterly Mrs. Chandos-Fane, now a widow for the second time, had joined them in Paris.

The Russells had gone gradually down in the world. We last saw them at Marleyford in all the grandeur of their wedding-day. Ill-luck seemed to have tracked their footsteps. An heir, born unexpectedly, had deprived Walter Russell of his expected baronetcy. The failure of a bank had taken from him much of his own fortune. Ill-health had been his portion. And only a year or two ago, the treachery of a friend for whom he had been responsible involved him in difficulties. Then the fine apartment in the Rue Rivoli was given up for one in the Rue des Beaux Arts, a very different quarter. As compared with many of those around it, it was fairly handsome and commodious : and relics of their prosperity filled it : ormolu clocks, boule cabinets, and—Mrs. Russell's lamentations. She liked magnificence : costly dress, and a handsome carriage to make her calls in : and, in a degree, she had this still. Intensely selfish was she, as in the times gone by.

On this day, when we first make Winifred's acquaintance, the late March afternoon, drawing to its close, found her, as usual, busy at her easel. Sitting by the bright wood fire in a lounging chair was a lady, whom few would have guessed to be the young artist's mother. Mother and daughter indeed were both fair ; but there the resemblance ceased. The girl was tall and bright and active-looking ; the elder woman was petite and languishing.

The difference between them was the difference between a pure white statue and a Dresden-china shepherdess. Winifred, severely simple in attire, fair, flaxen-haired and beautiful, owed nothing to art. Mrs. Chandos-Fane, elegantly dressed and elaborately coiffée, was a manufactured article of remarkable prettiness. She was nursing a white Angora kitten and reading Baudelaire's poems. For she was aesthetic, and declared that her daughter's pictures were not always "interesting."

"That is the third time you have sighed, my love. You are over-working, I am sure," she presently remarked, in a cool, refined voice, laying down her book with a delicate yawn.

"I am not easily over-worked, mother ; and the picture must be finished by next week."

"*Must!*" echoed Mrs. Fane. "There you have the fatal destiny of pot-boilers, my child. I have always told you, and I repeat, that you will never be a good artist until you have ceased to work for money."

"We must first cease to need money," answered Winifred rather brusquely.

"Ah, well!" exclaimed Mrs. Fane: and it was wonderful how the indefinite ejaculation conveyed by its tone that no problems were insoluble to persons of superior nature.

Winifred set her lips a little tightly, and an expression less of grave annoyance than of deliberate self-control for a moment clouded her bright young face.

"I am not sighing because I am fatigued," resumed she, after a pause; "but because my uncle is of late so manifestly worse."

"We must call up strength of mind to resign ourselves to the inevitable," replied Mrs. Fane, stroking the kitten's tail. "We cannot expect him to grow better, Winifred."

The door at this moment opened to admit a stout, cross-looking, yet elegant woman, who entered, dragging her fur mantle after her. It was Mrs. Russell. Handsome she undoubtedly was still: but few would have recognised her for the once beautiful Mary Hatherley.

"I am so tired!" she said fretfully, subsiding into the nearest chair. "The weather is quite mild to-day. What a fire! The room is suffocating," and she looked towards the closed windows.

"I find it cold indoors," remarked Mrs. Fane placidly; and she did not offer to let in any air.

"Is there no tea?" asked the new arrival, peevishly.

"I think there is a cup left," answered Winifred's mother, glancing carelessly at the little Japanese tea-service on a low table at her elbow.

"I am too tired to pour it out for myself," said Mrs. Russell.

Mrs. Fane put the kitten's paws round her neck and began talking to it softly. Winifred laid down her palette and brush and poured out the tea in silence.

"I have a piece of news for you," said her aunt to her as she took the cup. "Richard Dallas is dismissed from his employment."

"*No!*" Winifred stood in consternation.

"I always thought that would be the end of it," observed Mrs. Fane: who had never thought on the subject in any way.

"I drove there this afternoon," resumed Mrs. Russell, "and found them in great distress. I believe that the cause of his dismissal is some disgraceful discovery."

"Disgraceful to Dick? I don't believe it," exclaimed Winifred.

"Don't you, my love?" remarked her mother.

Winifred asked a string of eager questions, but Mrs. Russell was hopelessly vague. Naturally indolent now, her intelligence at this moment was additionally obscured by fatigue. She leaned back in a

condition of irritable somnolency, from which Mrs. Fane roused her at intervals by stirring up the fire.

Meanwhile, Winifred, as soon as her painting was brought to an end by the failing light, scraped her palette and thrust her brushes into water with unusual haste. The Dallases—an improvident, unfortunate family—were her great friends; and her affectionate imagination conjuring up vividly all that they must be at present enduring, she prepared to rush off to them with characteristic impetuosity.

All at once came a violent ring at the outer door, followed by the equally violent entrance of a young and very pretty girl, but by no means a good-tempered looking one. The puckered brow and angry eyes of this saucy, piquante brunette betrayed a disposition the reverse of mild, and, at this moment, apparently heated to explosion point.

"Oh, Gerty! I have heard the news," said Winifred, sorrowfully.

"Good evening, Miss Dallas," said Mrs. Chandos-Fane, icily reproofing.

"What a noise!" exclaimed Mrs. Russell.

Undisturbed by these manifestations of various feeling, Miss Gertrude Dallas cast herself into an arm-chair, mutely irate, and began beating the floor with her pretty foot.

"I am so distressed," whispered Winifred.

Gertrude shrugged her shoulders cynically. "It is just our luck," she answered.

"Can nothing be done?"

"A great deal. But we, my dear Winifred, are not the people to do it." Having delivered this remark, in a tone of bitter sarcasm, Miss Dallas folded her hands, fixed her eyes on a corner of the ceiling, and resumed her tattoo.

"Would you kindly explain what has happened?" asked Mrs. Fane.

That was soon done. Richard Dallas, Gertrude's half-brother, older than herself, and born of a French mother, had, through the interest of his maternal relatives, obtained a post as sub-curator to a provincial museum in France. The appointment, as conferred on a half-foreigner, had always excited some jealousy, and Richard had never hit it off with his immediate superior. Lately, some valuable Syracusan coins were discovered to be missing. The loss was probably of old date, the museum being very carelessly managed. But it had only been now found out: a scapegoat was needed: and personal spite found a vent in the choice of Richard Dallas.

"That is just the whole story," said Gertrude, bringing her curt narrative to a conclusion.

"How disgraceful!" breathed Winifred.

"Very unfortunate," observed Mrs. Fane politely, with a slight stress on the adjective, that brought an embarrassed blush to her daughter's cheeks and an angry stare to Gertrude's eyes.

"Dick is only the victim," affirmed the latter, as if in answer to

an unspoken accusation. "It is the head-curator who is to blame. The municipality should be written to ; the government memorialised ; the ——"

"Who says all this should be done ?" interposed Winifred, quietly.

"I say so," flashed out the other, angrily.

"Was it a sweet, white, soft, beautiful, *beautiful* kittensy, and did it never have to memorialise anybody, except its mistress for a wee-wee saucer of milk ?" lightly chanted Mrs. Fane, tilting the Angora up on its hind legs and looking at it with a fascinating smile.

Gertrude sprang up ; the indifference irritated her beyond control. "I am going, Winifred."

"No, you are not," returned Winifred with gentle authority, taking her two hands and forcing her back into her chair again. "You are to stay with me and be in some sort comforted, you poor child. Only you are to try and talk a little practical sense, for our behoof as well as for your own."

"What practical sense can I talk ?" flamed out Gertrude. "Of what use can I be ? Am I not a cipher, a nonentity ; in other words, a young lady ? Lady, forsooth ! Much good there is in being that, when one must toil and grind from morning to night like—like a crossing-sweeper. And everybody the while to cry 'Peace,' where there is no peace, and to preach patience when patience is only a cloak for incapacity."

"How very magnificent ! Where did you learn all that ?" laughingly retorted Winifred, her sense of fun getting momentarily the upper hand of her compassion. But Gertrude was tragic : in the presence of that eloquent kitten she had no resource but to be earnest. To be anything less was to be ridiculous : and ridicule was the one thing that Gertrude Dallas most feared on earth.

"It is very well for *you* to talk," she answered sulkily. "Who ever interferes with you ?"

"A difficult question to answer," remarked Mrs. Russell.

"Yes, indeed. Our dear Winny rules us all," spoke the mother.

Winifred looked down, but said nothing. She was as little given to self-pity as to self-praise ; nevertheless at this moment a vague revolt against injustice stirred faintly within her. The thousand small sacrifices of herself to which she owed her ascendancy—who was there to appreciate them ?

"There it is," pursued Gertrude triumphantly. "Winifred can do as she pleases. You can make use of your talents ; work unhampered ——"

"But surely you could work also, if you liked ?" interposed Mrs. Fane, with an innocent air of seeking for information.

"Yes, as a governess," replied Miss Dallas scornfully, turning a dusky red in her exasperation.

This governess question was a very sore point : as she had tried the career and ignominiously failed. Of course, through no fault of her

own : when were the Gertrude Dallases of this world anything but the victims of adverse circumstances ?

" I could spend my youth shut up in a stuffy schoolroom with detestable children of wooden intelligence—I could do that, of course," pursued the young lady, with magnificent contempt. " Or I could sweep a crossing, or go about with a basket selling pins and staylaces, or—in fact there is no end to the occupations which I might find if I chose." The accent on the last word was withering.

" Some governesses get a hundred a year," put in Mrs. Russell.

" Very probably. In some eyes, doubtless, a human machine is priceless," retorted Gertrude, with defiance.

" Are not *you* priceless ?" exclaimed Mrs. Fane to the kitten, which put out one velvet paw and tapped her on the cheek.

" Good evening," said Gertrude abruptly ; and she rose, pale with annoyance, and left the room. Winifred went with her to the stairs and took leave of her sorrowfully, promising to come as soon as dinner was over.

" We shall be glad to see you, of course," replied her friend not very graciously. " But I am afraid you will not find us very lively company," she added, and ran lightly down the stairs.

" What you can see to like in that ill-tempered girl passes my comprehension, Winifred," remarked Mrs. Fane.

" All Winifred's friends are eccentric," said Mrs. Russell plaintively.

" Wait until you have seen Mademoiselle Marthe !" laughed Winifred. " Then indeed you may talk of eccentricity."

" You are always threatening us with that person," exclaimed Mrs. Fane. " Who is she ?—and when is she definitely to appear ?"

" When I have succeeded in vanquishing her shyness," replied Winifred, " and I can't do that yet."

" I am sure you had much better leave her alone," observed Mrs. Russell. " It is too Quixotic to consider yourself bound by ties of eternal gratitude to a queer, probably vulgar old woman, just because she happened to show you a little attention when you were ill."

" She nursed me with the greatest devotion, and she is not vulgar," retorted the girl.

After dinner, Winifred prepared to start, her maid, Sophie, in attendance, for the Rue Ste. Catherine, where the Dallases dwelt. But before leaving, she tapped at a door at the end of the corridor. " Come in," said a voice, and Winifred entered her uncle's bed-room. A pleasant room, although it was the home of an invalid, and although its denizen knew no change but the slow advance of a mortal malady, and no variety but such as consists in spending one's bad days in bed and one's better ones on a sofa.

" Ah, my Brunhilda ! Whither away ?" said Walter Russell, looking up from the review he was reading by the light of a shaded lamp. The name—given her playfully in allusion to her fair, tall beauty—

and the tone in which it was pronounced, spoke volumes for the cordial friendship, deeper than mere relationship, which reigned between the sick man and the girl.

"I am sorry I shall not be here to read to you this evening," said Winifred, seating herself beside her uncle's couch; "but I must go to the poor Dallases. You have heard of their fresh misfortune?"

"Yes, poor things! Fate has a spite against them, as it always has against the feckless: if, indeed one should not rather say that the feckless have a spite against fate," added Mr. Russell with the half-wistful smile of a man whom evil fortune has made a philosopher.

"Now, what is the meaning of that? Something cynical, I am sure." And Winifred shook her golden head reprovingly.

"Only as Nature is cynical, my child. The feckless are clearly intended by natural laws to sink; yet the Winifreds of this world, with a great expenditure of energy and pity, persist in helping to keep them afloat."

"You know those are the things I don't like you to say, Uncle Walter. And I believe that one day the Dallases will find out how to help themselves."

"You believe that? Then you have a great deal of faith."

"Are you better to-night?" She took his wasted hand tenderly as she asked the question, and bent down to look into his face with anxious, loving eyes.

"I am better," he said, "for I am nearer the goal. Nay, do not look so sad, child. You are very good to grieve for me; but glance beyond your loving regrets and ask yourself what I have to live for."

"For your friends," murmured Winifred. Yet even as she said the words, even as she drew the noble, grey head to her and laid her soft, young cheek upon the massive forehead, regret for a moment died down in her, quenched by self-forgetful pity. Her uncle had been all in all to her. The books that she had read with him gained an added significance from his comments; and his intellectual companionship had educated her as no books alone could have done. Yet, above the passionate longing of her love and her youth and her strength to keep him with her always, rose the sympathetic comprehension of his sorrows. Of how little books and the love of friends, the voice of pity and the touch of tending hands, can be to a man who, stricken now with physical helplessness, and embittered with the sense of failure, looks back along the traversed track of life, and sees his baffled efforts standing phantom-like with regretful eyes of pain! Keeping back resolutely an unwonted rush of tears, Winifred pressed her lips upon the sick man's brow, and in that kiss, for that moment resigned him almost gladly—*almost!*—to the peace and silence of the tomb.

"Go—and come back quickly," he said. "And perhaps there may still be time for you to read me a page or two of our book. Your touch

must be magnetic, Winifred. Something that you meant that kiss to say to me seems to have done me good."

She did not find much to say in answer to that, but left him, promising to make haste. On her way down stairs she met Claire, the young flower-maker, who lived two stories above her, and who was helping her blind grandfather to climb the steep flights.

"Bon soir, mam'zelle," simultaneously said the girl's fresh tones and the old man's quavering treble, as they became aware of Winifred's presence. They were neighbours, these two girls, and had come to like one another much, although their intercourse was principally limited to nods from their respective windows, and the one was a young gentlewoman, and the other but a poor seamstress. Claire, sitting at her work in her humble room, could look down into Winifred's studio. Sometimes the young artist, brush in hand, would appear at the window, just for the sake of throwing a bright smile of greeting upwards. And often, in the early morning, for both rose with the lark, Winifred would be hanging out her canaries just as Claire appeared at her own casement with her blackbird. And Winifred declared that this same blackbird had been the source of much inspiration to her. For its first liquid notes echoing through the court seemed to be the herald of the spring. Then many an aching head and a flushed, weary face was lifted from its occupation of needlework, or watch-making, or copying. Windows were thrown open, just through the infection of gladness, and those condemned to stifling rooms and imperfect light through the dreary winter days, knew that soon the first tender shoots of green would brighten the town gardens, and the Marché aux Fleurs be fragrant with violets—not forced in hothouses, but gathered in the woods! It was these homely touches, reminders of the poetry of poverty and the holiness of work, which made her life in Paris dear to Winifred.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DALLASES.

MR. DALLAS, the unfortunate Richard's father, was one of those charming people who make everybody uncomfortable, and are universally adored. He was a perplexing unknown quantity in the lives even of his nearest and dearest: a fantastic element, with which they could never cope, and constantly disappointing expectation.

There was never any telling what Mr. Dallas might do next—except fail. For fail, he invariably did, in whatever he undertook. It was a brilliant kind of failure often, for he had plenty of talent. But the results, when they came to be inspected, were none the less dismal for having had a sort of phosphorescent splendour. He was a painter, a musician, a poet, and had produced creditable, albeit unfinished work in all lines. Only, through some queer perversity of

nature, he never produced it when wanted. If a picture were ordered of him, he set about composing a poem. If an editor (by some unheard-of stroke of good luck) were found to consent to read a poem, Mr. Dallas would discover that he had nothing good enough to show him : he would promise something better, and meanwhile, set to work on a song. Such industry as he had, and, to do him justice, he was rarely idle, seemed to recoil from the task appointed to it.

For the rest, Mr. Dallas had all the facile grace of his temperament and fascinated everyone. If nobody on a closer acquaintance entirely believed in him, on the other hand nobody ever entirely disbelieved in him. The most sober-minded and the most hardworking of his acquaintance had an infinite patience with him ; and, perpetually helped by their efforts above the immediate consequences of his own imprudence, he looked down with the smiling serenity of an all-unconscious self-complacency upon the toilers who supplied his wants.

"I am so glad to see you, dear," said kind-hearted, short-sighted Mrs. Dallas, receiving Winifred with open arms. "You have heard of our sad trouble. Take off your hat and have some tea."

The good little woman's fetish (for all divinity had long vanished from the idol) bore the sweet name of "home." Only, "home" with her meant really dining at one o'clock and having raspberry jam at tea. That was a delicacy which had soothed her children's angry tempers when they were little : she could not conceive that it should fail in a similar effect now that they were big. Their aberrations perplexed her, as all aberrations did equally, from house-breaking to undarned socks, but when she beheld them gathered round the hissing urn the evidence of their discontented countenances never availed to convince her that peace did not reign in their hearts.

"I have just dined, but I will take a cup," replied Winifred, knowing that to refuse was to break her hostess's heart. "Where is Dick?"

"Gone out for a little stroll, poor boy : but he will be home to tea," said Mrs. Dallas, cheerfully. "Mr. Dallas is in his studio, hard at work. He has had an order to paint Monsieur and Madame Dubreuil's portraits ; they are to be finished in a month, for their daughter's birthday."

"And is he painting them by lamplight?" asked Winifred, in great astonishment, yet pleased at the news.

"He is preparing some etching-plates, and starts on an etching tour to-morrow," explained Gertrude, with a kind of sulky irony.

"Poor papa ! He is always so busy," remarked simple Mrs. Dallas.

"He might be busy to better purpose just now, mamma."

"Your papa knows his own affairs best, you may be sure, my dear." The little air of matronly dignity with which this reproof was administered, and its own intrinsic, affectionate imbecility, secretly exasperated Gertrude. But for once she subsided into silence, after no stronger protest than an expressive toss.

"Well, what are you all about? Is tea not ready? Ah! Good-evening, Miss Winifred!" said Mr. Dallas, rubbing his hands with the bearing of a man who has achieved a task and is pleased with it.

"We are waiting for poor Dick," said Mrs. Dallas.

"Wait for no one. Punctuality is the essence of success. There is no defect for which I have so profound a contempt as unpunctuality," observed he, turning towards Winifred.

This in the presence of a domestic calamity would have astonished Winifred, could anything in Mr. Dallas have astonished her. As it was, she only said gravely, "I came to condole with you about Richard."

"Ah, Richard! Poor lad!" Regret clouded the father's open, handsome countenance. "He has been infamously treated, Miss Power. Infamously. I have written out a petition. Perhaps a better plan would be to horsewhip the curator? I think I will go to Blois to do it. By Jove! I will start to-morrow," wound up Mr. Dallas, struck with the sudden idea.

"And your etching?" suggested Gertrude.

"The etching be hanged! it can wait," replied her father, with serenity. "Here's Richard. We were going to begin tea without you, my boy; you are five minutes late."

Richard, a dark, slender, and attractive young man, came forward and shook hands with Winifred in silence. He was looking sad and pale.

"I am so sorry for you," she murmured.

"I am sorry for myself, but there is little help in that," he said, glancing at her gratefully. "I suppose I am fated to go to the wall."

Gertrude, curled up in an arm-chair, here gave a derisive laugh. "We are always going to the wall, all of us. In fact, we live in an impasse," she observed amiably.

"In the absence of more effectual effort, my child, you can continue to console yourself by making epigrammatic remarks," said Mr. Dallas, not well pleased.

Gertrude looked furious; she hated reproof. But in any war of words with her father, she knew that she was always beaten, though she had inherited much of his caustic wit.

"Where is the cosy?" inquired of the world at large Mrs. Dallas, peering about painfully.

"It was left in the drawing-room. Georgie, go and fetch it," commanded Gertrude of her younger sister, a lanky maiden of fifteen.

"Go yourself!" retorted Georgie, who was nursing a splendid cat, the mother of Mrs. Chandos-Fane's kitten.

Enraged to activity, Gertrude sprang up and made a dart at the rebel. Georgie ducked; the cat bounded: Mrs. Dallas's key-basket was upset, and its contents were scattered upon the floor. She stooped to collect them, caught a corner of the table-cover, and some of the cups fell with a crash to the ground.

"Gertrude!" cried Mr. Dallas, turning his anger upon her. "Go to your room, and stay there."

"I?" Gertrude exclaimed. "I?"

"You," replied her father. "When you are by, there is neither peace nor quiet of late; neither decent behaviour nor civil speech."

The girl stood for one moment transfixed with amazement and a bewildering sense of wrong. Then, as an ill-timed and triumphant giggle from the appeased Georgie met her ear, she turned and rushed away, banging the door behind her.

Winifred made a movement to follow her, but Mr. Dallas interposed. "Let her be, for Heaven's sake," he said. "But that insanity is unknown in our family, I should really tremble sometimes for that child's future reason. Her storms of passion are unbearable."

Poor Mrs. Dallas, with trembling hands, and murmuring that *this* time it was not Gertrude who was in fault, restored something like order to the tea-table, rang the hand-bell for fresh cups, and invited everybody to sit down. She crept away presently with Gertrude's tea to the culprit's room, but returned in a grieved way, shaking her head. The door was locked, and she had been denied admittance.

Except by herself and Winifred, Gertrude was not missed. Mr. Dallas himself was in delightful spirits. He always was thus in the presence of family misfortune; that was one of his peculiarities. He even rallied Richard, who sat abstracted and silent, and launched out into brilliant disquisitions on things in general, and all that he intended to do with them.

Tea over, Winifred rose to go. "I will call Gerty. She would be so sorry not to say good-bye to you," said Mrs. Dallas, eagerly.

Winifred knew that the goings and comings of the entire world were at this moment matters of supreme indifference to the indignant Gertrude. But too good-natured to contradict, she waited.

Mrs. Dallas returned, looking disturbed. "Gertrude's room is empty," she cried. "She must have gone out."

"Alone? and at this hour!" exclaimed Mr. Dallas.

"Well, I cannot find her."

Gertrude had slipt out unobserved. Hortense, the servant, and Winifred's own maid, in high converse in the kitchen, had heard the outer door close softly, but did not know who had gone out: had thought it was one of the gentlemen.

"I expect she has only gone to the Bonnards'," suggested the mother, the Bonnards being great friends of Gertrude's.

"But she ought not to go at this hour," said Mr. Dallas. Presently the bell tinkled, and "Here she is!" they exclaimed. However it was not Gertrude, but a note from her to her mother, brought by a commissionnaire, who said there was no answer.

Mrs. Dallas opened the note; then stood up scared and speechless. Richard took it from her.

"Read it out," said Mr. Dallas to his son: and he obeyed.

"I believe of my presence a home where, by your own confession, my part is that of a firebrand. Domestic life being, so far as I am concerned, a failure, I intend in future to live away from you. Before this reaches you I shall have left Paris. Do not try to find me. It will be useless.—*Gertrude*."

Horror-stricken, they looked at one another. Then Richard rushed away to overtake, if possible, the commissionaire, and Mrs. Dallas and Georgie began to cry. Winifred sat dumb; Mr. Dallas walked up and down the room. He was less frightened than angry: such a proceeding as this of his daughter's grated, he would have told you, on his fine sense of order.

When Richard returned, breathless, he had failed to find the messenger. Mrs. Dallas felt quite sure that the only people to apply to were the Bonnards, that *Gertrude* had gone to them, and Richard again departed. He came back, again unsuccessful, but bringing with him the astonished and dismayed Monsieur Bonnard. He, bald-headed and decorated, a respectable and kind-hearted Frenchman, was quite overcome at Richard's news, and had arrived to offer his services.

"They had not seen Mademoiselle *Gertrude* for some days," he said. "He was quite sure she had not been even for a moment at their house that evening. Their only visitor had been Lieutenant Valéry, who had called to take leave."

"Lieutenant Valéry!" exclaimed Hortense, who, French servant-like, had come in to listen. "Was he an infantry officer, Monsieur? A little young man with a reddish moustache, and black bright eyes?"

"Mais oui; mais oui—" that described him exactly.

"Then Mam'zelle *Gertrude* has run away with him," Hortense boldly declared.

Mr. Dallas uttered an exclamation of incredulous anger; Monsieur Bonnard one of horror; Mrs. Dallas breathed a sigh of relief. *Her* simple mind immediately conjured up a romantic love-story, tears, forgiveness, blessings, a trousseau and general happiness. The men, more alive to practical difficulties, took a different view.

"Run away with him!" indignantly repeated Mr. Dallas. "How dare you say so, woman? Who is the fellow, Bonnard? I never heard of him before."

"He visits at our house. I am afraid your daughter has met him on occasions there," groaned Monsieur Bonnard.

"All I know is, they meet in the street sometimes; the other day, when I was out with Mam'zelle *Gertrude*, they had a long conversation," affirmed Hortense.

"We must go after them," exclaimed Mr. Dallas, starting up. "Dick, you come with me. Where is this Valéry to be heard of, Bonnard?"

"He starts to-night for Lyons, on leave, mon ami"—and the

kind-hearted old Frenchman, looking deeply concerned, took the agitated father aside. "A French officer of that rank cannot marry unless he deposits 25,000 frs. at the Ministry of War. Valéry has not a sou."

Mr. Dallas looked at him with scared eyes, hardly understanding. The vivid colour, which excitement had brought to his face, slowly receded.

"The chief point is to pursue them as quickly as possible," urged Monsieur Bonnard, pressing his hand.

Ten minutes later Mr. Dallas and Richard had left the house, taking with them all the money they could scrape together. They were accompanied to the station by Monsieur Bonnard.

But on arriving there they found they had just missed the Lyons night express by five minutes; and they had, in consequence, no choice but to wait with such patience as they could until morning. Part of the night was spent in making inquiries; and they were able to establish with tolerable certainty that a young couple, answering to the description of the fugitives, had indeed started by the express.

Winifred meanwhile had lingered a few minutes with the idea of comforting Mrs. Dallas. But to her surprise the little woman needed but slight consolation.

"Poor dear Gerty, she has been rather headstrong at times of late. Perhaps you may have noticed it?"

Winifred, who had never noticed anything else in all the years of her acquaintance with her friend, murmured a vague assent.

"It often puzzled me," pursued Mrs. Dallas placidly, "puzzled and pained me. But now it is quite explained. The poor child had this love-affair in her head. If she would only have placed confidence in me, I might have made it all smooth with her dear papa."

This new view of Mrs. Dallas, as a person of influence in her own family, severely tried Winifred's gravity. But the unconscious pathos of it touched her also.

She went home with a heavy heart. Even while hoping for the best, she had ten times Mrs. Dallas's knowledge and experience, and was proportionately removed from the possibility of taking the same sanguine view. And quick of sympathy always, she was more than ever disposed to grieve where Gertrude was concerned. The two girls had been friends from childhood, and Winifred loved the wayward nature that was so far beneath her own. She made excuses for Gertrude's violent temper, and exalted the fitful generosity which at times redeemed it. For, of all the many illusions of life, what spell is more potent while it lasts, more irrecoverable when it has vanished, than the tender glamour of early friendship? Half-way down the hill of life we look backwards along sunny meads, and onwards into gloom. Above us, there on the flowery slope, appears a radiant form: is it our youth? Is it our early friend? Before we

know, the gracious phantom has vanished ; and, beckoning down the rugged path, stands the austere, veiled maiden called Duty.

Two or three days of suspense ensued, during which the story of the flight oozed out, and raised a great hubbub round poor Gertrude's name. Then Mr. Dallas wrote briefly to say that he had found his daughter, and would soon be returning.

"With her, of course," said Mrs. Dallas. "Dear papa ! I wonder if we shall like the poor young man." She pitied Lieutenant Valéry without exactly knowing why. Probably she pictured him to herself as tremendously in love.

When Mr. Dallas and his son appeared, however, they had a very unexpected story to tell.

Gertrude had run away with the young man not out of love, but from sheer recklessness. Smarting under her father's reproaches and under the fancied wrongs of years, so exaggerated in her imagination just then, she had quitted her home with the intention of taking refuge in the first instance with the Bonnards. Further than this she did not know what she should do, and perhaps in her excitement did not care. The Bonnards might want to force her back to her home. Such a prospect filled her with fury and despair.

In front of the Bonnards' house she had run up against Valéry, who was leaving it. She had met him several times, and her haughty vanity had been gratified by his evident admiration. In a world which did not appreciate her, even the homage of a French lieutenant of foot was a drop of comfort.

He stopped in much amazement at seeing her alone at such an hour, not putting the best construction on it.

Her confused, passionate answers to his questions only increased his doubts, but he listened to her with that curious mixture of incredulity and pity which a man of his stamp accords to a woman's narrative of her wrongs. To make a long story short, he presently proposed to her, perhaps three parts in jest, to accompany him to Lyons. Impelled by some demon of crazy recklessness, she accepted the invitation.

She took a savage pleasure in compromising herself in the eyes of her family, and of consequences she had at the moment but a very confused impression. In her inexperience and her arrogance she believed she could keep herself perfectly straight, and defy the world.

The alarm, the angry disappointment of her awakening, constituted the bitterest, because the first *real*, lesson of her life. A very few hours of Lieutenant Valéry's society sufficed to fill her with detestation for him ; and she no sooner found herself in Lyons than she ran away for the second time, leaving her companion extremely astonished and aggrieved—feelings later considerably aggravated by the horse-whipping inflicted on him by Mr. Dallas, and for which that gentleman refused him satisfaction.

As for Gertrude herself, the state of repentant excitement in which

her father found her was pitiable. She would not hear of marrying Valéry : even before the horse-whipping, and supposing that he had desired it. She would not hear of returning home. She supposed her character was damaged, she informed them, folks were so ill-natured, but her people themselves were to blame. She reproached her father, her brother, everybody : and poor Dick had ever been a good brother to her. She wept, she stormed, she was tragic and pathetic, simply by force of her mental perversity. The strength of her conviction, that she was a victim, was a rock on which all argument broke.

"I must make shipwreck of my life now in any case. Yes, I choose to do it. Let me take my own way," she reiterated : and Mr. Dallas, worn out by anxiety and anger, fairly succumbed at last to her violence. Her plan was to go to Turin as teacher in a school. She knew of such an opening, as it chanced, and might as well begin her series of failures there as anywhere else. So Richard was sent to escort her to Turin, and Mr. Dallas returned to Paris alone.

The exact truth, about Gertrude's flight, her family naturally never told. Neither the Bonnards nor Winifred learnt whether Hortense's suggestion of an elopement had turned out to be correct. Nobody ever asked now for Gertrude ; and her name ceased to be mentioned.

Only Mrs. Dallas, when alone with Winifred, sometimes would drop her head upon the girl's shoulder and weep silent tears of disappointment and despair.

CHAPTER IX.

MADEMOISELLE MARTHE.

MRS. RUSSELL, as we know, complained that Winifred's friends were generally eccentric. And certainly the one about whose eccentricity there could be no doubt was Mademoiselle Marthe.

She was not French, but very English. Nevertheless, the very few friends she had, belonged to the country of her adoption, and none of them called her by her surname, or thought of asking what it might be. She was *the Mademoiselle Marthe par excellence* of the quartier. No one, before or since, had ever been seen like her. She had a tiny, wizened body, a small, puckered face, and a still, half-scared manner which contrasted strangely with her wistful eyes. Something there was so very human about her that, looking well at her, you felt inexplicably compassionate and attracted. But any advance was chilled by her unconquerable and painful reserve. "She is like a caged and frightened fawn;" "She looks as if she had once been told a ghastly secret, and never forgotten it," were the various phrases by which people strove to explain the odd impression which she made upon them.

And, because she was incomprehensible, she was, on the whole, more feared than thoroughly pitied. Her pride, combined with her deadly poverty, made the weak-minded a little resentful of her; and she sometimes excited the evil fear of the malignant by sudden flashes of clear perception and brief assertions of principle. Her usual manner half frightened and very depressed, gave place at moments to a pathetic excitability. Something in her, long repressed, seemed at times to rise in revolt against her sad and anguished life, and sting her into a feverish and short-lived activity. By profession she was a copyist of pictures: very humbly and devotedly she trod in the track of great departed artists, and seemed, for the most part, quite devoid of any personal ambition. But every now and again she appeared possessed by an evanescent desire to achieve something greater; and while this fit lasted she was wont to make sketches of original paintings, and exhibit them for approval to her fellow-workers in the gallery.

It was the favourite amusement of some mocking, ill-natured spirits extravagantly to praise these attempts, and nothing could be more touching than the expression with which Mademoiselle Marthe would listen to their words. Gratitude, unwilling doubt, the longing to believe, the desire to love, the sad, sad secret-sense of artistic incapacity struggled for mastery in her half-childlike, ever-questioning, and wholly mournful eyes. One day in the gallery, Winifred being present, Mademoiselle Marthe had been made, as usual, the butt of the rest. Marie Duchêne, the terror of everybody for her cruel tongue, Clara Smythe, an underbred English girl, and half a dozen others had gathered in front of the sketch, and were exalting it in their usual style.

"C'est épatait," declared Marie, in mock rapture.

"Too lovely," added Clara.

"Look at the grouping!" "The expression!" "Ce coloris!" "The feeling!"

Thus ran the chorus, accompanied by motions and gestures. Winifred, her back turned to them all, went on painting in silent indignation.

Presently, when the victim had gone away, Marie mockingly began upon her. "Notre chère Winifred! Does such genius render her jealous, or simply strike her dumb?" A general laugh greeted this.

Winifred turned. "I think you should all be ashamed of yourselves," she said, quietly, but her blue eyes flashed like a sword in the sun.

There was a pause of amazement. "Well, to be sure!" exclaimed Clara, with a toss of her head.

"Tiens! tiens!" murmured Marie, and made a grimace.

"I am quite in earnest," continued Winifred, unmoved. "I think you all behave disgracefully to that poor old woman. She is not very wise, but she is a gentle, unoffending little soul, who would

not hurt a fly, and she does not perceive your ridicule, because ridicule finds no place in her own simple and kindly heart. She is full of reverence for the art which we all profess to follow, and although she never can succeed, because ungifted, her failure is a nobler thing than the facile degradation of talent which we pretend to honour as success."

"Is that intended for me?" flashed out Marie Duchêne.

"For anybody whom the cap may fit," answered Winifred coldly.

Then there was a sudden cry of "Hush," and the angry group turned, to find Mademoiselle Marthe standing behind Winifred, within hearing. She was very pale, and her aged baby-face had the pained look of her darker hours.

"I went out to buy galettes for you. Marie said she was hungry."

She held out her offering mechanically, as mechanically as she had spoken the words. One or two of the girls had the grace to look ashamed. Marie, with an exaggerated air of gratitude, sprang forward to embrace the little artist; but Mademoiselle Marthe drew back.

"I do not want your kisses, my dear," she said gently. "Somehow, they have a flavour of your praise."

She never showed anybody her sketches again; and, indeed, by degrees she ceased to make them. The lesson had been too cruel, and the memory of its pain, abiding with her, gradually quenched the faint, flickering flame of her belief in her own powers.

She did not overwhelm her champion with any expressions of gratitude, but showed her affection by a hundred small signs. If they were together in the gallery, she was never so happy as when allowed to scrape Winifred's palette, or wash her brushes, or run down to buy her luncheon. The snow had hardly melted from the ground before a bunch of sweet-smelling violets was left in the early morning, with the concierge, at Winifred's house; and one Christmas Day appeared a piping bullfinch which Mademoiselle Marthe had tamed and taught through many patient weeks.

In vain the girl sought to return these kindnesses. Mademoiselle Marthe would accept nothing from her, and contrived moreover to give to her rejection a gentle dignity, in touching contrast with her usual humble ways. Winifred herself was long before she ventured to penetrate to the tiny room which the little old maid called her home. When she did at last see it, she was agreeably surprised by it, for, although modest to the verge of bareness, it had nothing sordid. The plain, scanty furniture was scrupulously clean, and the windows were bright with flowers and birds.

"And you have lived here all alone for more than twenty years!" exclaimed Winifred, wondering what the unspoken chronicle of the long, lonely life had been. "You have friends—visitors?"

"I have friends—yes. Everybody is very kind to me. But I have no gentlemen or lady visitors, if that is what you mean. At

least not until you came," added Mademoiselle Marthe, with her faint but patient and pleased little smile.

Winifred, almost unconsciously, took her hand. "But now you will make friends among your own people. You will come to see us?" she exclaimed, impetuously.

"My own people? I have none," replied Mademoiselle Marthe.
"My kindred are the poor and suffering."

The words had a sudden ring of pain, and a new expression swept over the speaker's face. It was not anger, still less resentment; it could hardly even be called bitterness. But it was full of a fathomless and blasting woe. Two burning spots had come into the wrinkled cheeks, the lips quivered with an agitation made all the more painful by the strained look of the tearless eyes. She drew a little away from her visitor, with a movement that unwittingly said how she shrank from commonplace compassion. Winifred began to talk about herself, her aims, her friends, her pictures, and thus drew to the surface that unselfish sympathy, which was the key-note to the other's reticent nature. In time, Winifred thought, she would vanquish the little woman's reserved timidity, and end by bringing about a meeting between her and Mr. Russell. She ardently desired this: for, dimly yet strongly feeling that Mademoiselle Marthe had been in some way wronged, she believed that her kind and clever uncle might be able to learn the secret. But in this aim she failed.

One day, indeed, Mademoiselle Marthe caught quickly at the name "Russell," which Winifred had for the first time mentioned.

"Is that your uncle's name? And *Walter*, did you say?" She turned rather pale, and seemed struggling to hide some emotion.

"Yes. Did you ever know him?" was the surprised question.

"Nay, there are many Russells in the world. And *Walter Russell* too." But even while thus answering, Mademoiselle Marthe looked strangely troubled. Winifred sat silent, expecting, hoping to be further questioned; but no interrogation came, and Mademoiselle Marthe began to talk of something else. Nevertheless her manner remained wistful: and as Winifred, on leaving, stooped to kiss her, she spoke in a trembling way.

"Does injustice make you angry, child? Could you be pitiful and loving even if the world reproached you for it?"

"Of course," replied Winifred.

To her surprise and consternation this answer provoked a burst of tears, the very first that she had seen in her friend. Tears are akin to speech: was the veil of this anguished past, whatever it might be, to be finally lifted?

No: Mademoiselle Marthe checked her emotion, almost as if ashamed of it, and dropped her head humbly. "It is so long since I have cried," she said, in her simple, patient way; and Winifred felt that the moment for questioning had not come.

With characteristic loyalty, she abstained from following up the

clue, if such it could be called, which the agitation at the name of Russell might have seemed to offer. That is, she did not describe Mademoiselle Marthe's singularities to her uncle, or ask him if he had ever known anybody answering to such a description.

The friendship, thus begun between the strangely-contrasted pair, was destined, on Winifred's side, to be intensified later by gratitude. The previous summer to this, when we first make her acquaintance, her uncle and aunt having gone to England, she joined several other artists at Fontainebleau. Mademoiselle Marthe was there also, although she could not be said to belong to the party. Presently small-pox broke out. Winifred fell ill. Fortunately her attack proved of the mildest; but it sufficed to scare away all her companions save one. The exception was Mademoiselle Marthe, who suddenly proved herself of a rare efficiency. Feeling seemed to stand her in lieu of special intelligence; where suffering of any sort had to be alleviated, she always knew the right thing to do. And Winifred, tended by her with a limitless devotion, came to feel the moral superiority that was veiled by her persistent reserve. Formerly she had merely pitied Mademoiselle Marthe; now she respected and loved her. And when she got well, she thought she never could do enough to mark and proclaim her gratitude. The sight of such friendship stirred to malice the small souls of her fellow students.

During one of Winifred's rare visits to the gallery, when they were all back in Paris again, Clara Smythe began another battle.

"It is a pity you were not here yesterday, Miss Power. You might have heard 'something to your advantage,' as the advertisements say."

"To my advantage?" Winifred repeated, in surprise.

"Yes. That is, of course, if you consider it an advantage to be enlightened as to the true history of your friends."

There was a general little giggle at this, the rest of the girls being prepared for what was to come.

"I must trouble you to explain yourself," returned Winifred.

"Among the many kind of failures which you consider interesting, do you include the failure to keep out of prison?"

The colour rose in Winifred's cheeks. "I am a bad hand at guessing riddles," she said.

"Yesterday, my aunt, who was passing through Paris, came with me here," resumed the spiteful girl. "As we entered, your protégée, Mademoiselle Marthe, passed out. My aunt gave a great start of amazement on seeing her, for she recognised her as a person she had known once in England."

"Yes?" repeated Winifred, wondering what was coming.

"And who was condemned to a term of imprisonment for writing threatening letters?"

There was a dead pause, then Winifred said coldly, "I presume your aunt gave you some particulars as to names and dates and places?"

"Really, Miss Power, to be frank, I was too shocked to ask for particulars," replied Clara.

"Then you must permit me to believe that your aunt made a mistake of identity. It could not have been Mademoiselle Marthe." And with these words, Winifred, who had already packed up her painting materials and made ready for her departure, turned her back and walked away.

"The Christian name was the same at any rate, and you can ask your friend if she has ever been in Kent," called out Clara: but Winifred was already out of hearing.

For several weeks Winifred saw nothing of Mademoiselle Marthe, for Mr. Russell became very ill and claimed all her attention. By the time he again partially recovered great things had happened. The King of Prussia had turned on his heel and left M. Benedetti standing in the sunlight on the promenade at Ems: war had been declared and the first shots fired; and although France did not yet fully foresee the catastrophe in store for her, matters began to look serious.

The Bonnards were leaving Paris in some haste for their country-house in Provence, and they invited Mr. and Mrs. Russell to accompany them. Winifred could not leave, for she had a picture to finish, and Mrs. Chandos-Fane had no fancy for French country-life. So she betook herself to Boulogne-sur-Mer, on the understanding that her daughter should join her there.

Winifred, thus left to her own devices, bethought herself one fine Sunday morning of Mademoiselle Marthe, and went off to see her.

"It is my birthday, dear," said the girl, giving her little friend a hug. "You cannot be so barbarous as to expect me to spend it all by myself. So you are just to come home and help me to eat the feast that Sophie has prepared for me. And afterwards we will go to the Bois and see the brides."

Mademoiselle Marthe was nothing loth. She made herself ready with her wonted care; one of the most characteristic and touching things about her being the exquisite neatness of her poor attire. Winifred, watching her affectionately, thought she seemed brighter than usual, and was struck anew with the child-like goodness underlying the age and sorrow of her face.

They sallied forth, and the girl's gleesome prattle, combined with the loveliness of the day, kept up the pleased look in her companion's eyes. For many long and weary years, indeed, Mademoiselle Marthe's dimmed glance had not dwelt with such untroubled peace on the serenity of the heavens. Such moments are the ambuscades of fate: another instant, and the blow falls.

All at once, the two friends came upon Clara Smythe and a party of girl-artists. Winifred would have passed on with a bow, but Mademoiselle Marthe, partly from innate courtesy, partly from habit, stopped and held out her hand. Miss Smythe, however, was equal

to the occasion. Drawing herself up with stony dignity, she looked the little woman over from head to foot. Then she dropped a curtsey.

"I think, madam, you must have mistaken me for some old acquaintance from Marleyford," she said, and walked away.

Her victim stood rooted on the sunlit path, still as a graven image, an image of Pain. She uttered no word, no sigh even, but her face turned so ashen grey that Winifred involuntarily cried aloud in alarm.

"Come home, dear," exclaimed the generous girl, quivering with indignation. "Never mind what they say; just come home with me."

The simple, ardent words fell upon unheeding ears. Mademoiselle Marthe mechanically allowed herself to be led away, but her awful silence remained unbroken. Only by a sign did she testify her wish to be taken to her own home instead of to Winifred's.

The latter, frightened at the unnatural calm, called a coach and put her into it. She went home with her; took off her dress; made her lie down; and petted her in womanly fashion. Then, not knowing what more to do, in a very passion of sympathy, she drew the trembling frame into her strong young arms, and kissed her friend in speechless pity. At the touch, Mademoiselle Marthe burst into a convulsion of tearless sobs, which seemed as if they would last for ever. Scared and powerless, Winifred sent in haste for a doctor. He administered a calming dose, and after a while the patient dropped asleep. But she awoke at the end of an hour or two, feverish and delirious. She began to rave incoherently about her own trial and the presence of Mary in the witness-box.

This one vision returned again and again with singular vividness; it was plain that of the many circumstances connected with her betrayal, the treachery of her cousin had burnt most deeply into Martha Freake's memory. The piteous prayer for truth, only the truth, reiterated every moment, seemed to tell its own tale; and Winifred, listening through the long watches of the night, registered a mental vow that if redress could be had she would obtain it. Her uncle and aunt came from Marleyford: from them it would be easy to learn the whole story.

Mademoiselle Marthe recovered. That is to say, consciousness returned to her, and with it something of her usual manner. But her face wore a constant look of torture, and instinctively Winifred felt that to question her would be like probing a quivering wound.

She consequently had no choice but to possess her soul in patience, and wait for some future chance of enlightenment. From her uncle and aunt she had failed to obtain information. Mr. Russell was too unwell to write, and his wife was one of those unsatisfactory correspondents who never answer questions. Finding that Mrs. Russell passed over the subject of Mademoiselle Marthe in silence, Winifred could but conclude that she had nothing of real interest regarding it to relate.

All this time events in the great world had been proceeding with startling rapidity. Sédan had been fought, the empire had fallen,

and the Prussians were marching upon Paris. There was a sauve-qui-peut among the foreigners, and Mrs. Chandos-Fane wrote to her daughter in hot haste to join her at Boulogne.

Winifred in her heart would rather have remained where she was. To her, not foreseeing what was to happen, the prospect of the siege held forth no terrors. Moreover, she loved Paris and felt all the inexplicable fascination which France, in her darkest as in her brightest days, can cast upon the minds of men. It was pain, to her, to quit in such an hour the great city where she had dwelt so long.

But Mrs. Fane's letter was imperative. That lady possessed one of those indefinite natures with which it is impossible to deal. On the surface as airy as gossamer, as light as the froth of the sea, she had a clinging tenacity of purpose which was not to be repressed.

Her present letter to Winifred was that of a lonely and loving mother. "I have but you in the world, my child," she wrote, in a delicate, flowing hand. "Since the death of your dear step-father, since my dear little children, one after another (your half-brothers and sisters, love) were taken from me, my life has been desolate. I say this in no reproachful spirit. You have your art (as you call it); and you make some money by it; naturally you have slipped into the habit of being absorbed by it. But you must *sometimes* think of your poor mamma. I am sure I am not exacting. You generally have your own way, darling; and I think I am always indulgent. But France is no place at present for a young girl. No, not even for my wise Winifred. . . . who *thinks* herself so wise! I am going to England, and I should like you to come with me. Some mothers might say they *required* it: but I only say I should *like* it. My Winifred, after a little reflection, will perhaps see that the day may come when she will not be sorry she has sometimes done something to please her loving

"MAMSIE.

"P.S. I have met Sir John Hatherley here, and with him the three ladies whom he has so *generously* received into his home. He is very nice. Much nicer than his sister, *I* think. But of course that is only my opinion. He tells me of a charming cottage to let close by his own place. I should like to take it. But mothers have to consult their daughters nowadays."

Winifred read this epistle with some perplexity and a dim sense of pain. Her sensitive conscience made her very quick to blame herself and very much alive to reproach. She quite seriously asked herself if she had ever been wanting in love or respect to her mother? Yet if she had not, what did Mrs. Fane's insinuations mean?

There came a time of riper experience, when she learnt that the gist of her mother's letters had to be sought in their postscripts. But she was too young and too generous to understand this yet; and she felt vaguely dissatisfied with herself the whole day.

The notion of disregarding her mother's wishes, when so plainly

expressed, never even occurred to her. She packed her boxes with all speed ; took a sorrowful farewell of Mademoiselle Marthe (whom no entreaties could persuade to leave Paris) ; a regretful one of the poor seamstress, Claire, and a mute one of all the familiar faces, all the well-known sights and sounds which had woven themselves into the many-coloured web of her student-life.

On reaching Boulogne-sur-Mer, she found Mrs. Chandos-Fane the centre of an admiring circle of devotees, who were disposed to regard Winifred herself with a lively interest slightly dashed with hostility.

For while talking of her daughter, praising her daughter, longing (as she said) for her daughter's arrival, the widow had managed in some subtle, probably unconscious way, to convey that her daughter did not appreciate her. "My beautiful Winifred"—"my clever Winifred"—"my terribly strong-minded Winifred," were words never off her lips. And as a rule people do not like the "clever or the strong-minded."

She had a great deal to tell about Sir John Hatherley, and to this Winifred listened with unfailing interest. Sir John, Mrs. Russell's brother, was, people said, her benefactor. This was never admitted by Mrs. Russell ; she, besides being of a generally aggrieved turn of mind, considered herself particularly injured in being left by her father's will dependent upon her brother. Nothing that he could do seemed sufficient compensation for this original injustice. But others, looking at things from a different point of view, were disposed to think that the millionaire did a good deal ; for Mr. and Mrs. Russell owed their principal means of existence to his liberality.

Whenever additional money had been needed by *her*, he was written to, and, as far as Winifred knew, he had never failed to respond to the call. Personally Winifred felt grateful to him, for much of her education must have indirectly been paid for out of his purse.

Winifred had never seen Sir John ; but she thought much of him, and always as a good and great man. She had lived abroad ; in Italy, Germany, of late in France ; he detested the Continent, and it was a mere chance which had recently brought him to spend, for the first time in his life, a few weeks at Boulogne-sur-Mer. The bathing there had been recommended for his widowed sister-in-law, Mrs. William Hatherley ; who, with her two daughters, dwelt under Sir John's roof, further recipients of his bounty, being themselves penniless.

"When I saw those three women," said Mrs. Fane to her daughter, "I must say that the admiration I had always felt for that benevolent man was increased a thousandfold. Such a woman, she ! and the young ones, oh so frivolous."

"Perhaps they suit him very well," replied Winifred, not always disposed to accept her mother's judgments.

"No doubt you know best, love," answered Mrs. Fane ; "but I believe you have not seen them ? No. So I thought. Then, subject to your future correction, I may be allowed to give my opinion.

I think they are quite unworthy to be the companions of such a man as Sir John."

"Is he so very cultivated, then?" asked Winifred, a little subdued.

"*I* think so. I believe that a love of old books is generally supposed to show a cultivated mind."

"That depends upon whether the collector reads them or not," answered Winifred brightly. "Sir John has always been something of a Sphinx to me. From his letters to Aunt Mary I never could make out what manner of man he was intellectually."

"You will soon know, my almost too-clever daughter," rejoined Mrs. Fane, with a smile and a little pat on Winifred's cheek. "I have authorised Sir John to take for us the pretty cottage I told you about. We shall find him a delightful neighbour."

In a very short while Mrs. Fane crossed the channel with her daughter and maid, to take possession of this desirable cottage; which had been made ready for them. It was in the neighbourhood of Sir John Hatherley's residence of later years, and not too far from London. But on their arrival they heard that Sir John and his family were still away; and it struck Winifred that this piece of news curiously dashed her mother.

Mrs. Fane could console herself, if necessary, by contemplating Sir John's handsome residence, The Limes, its velvet lawns and its beautiful grounds. For the grand stuccoed mansion, placed on a slight rise, looked down upon the neighbourhood both metaphorically and materially. It was the largest and the finest house in the place, and the centre of much local social ambition: to be invited to it was an honour; to be shut out from it a reproach.

To Winifred, fresh from the roar of Paris, there was something very soothing in this suburban neighbourhood, with its pretty red-brick dwellings, with creepers climbing up them, and the flowers blooming in the beds behind the iron wickets. The neighbourhood was already a tolerably large one and grew, alas, daily. But there was still a common; still a rustic-looking ale-house; still a genuine English lane or two, which echoed to the cry of the cuckoo in spring and the songs of nightingales in summer. And on each side of the lanes were buttercup-strewn meadows, where kine crouched beneath the shade, and rooks cawed in the branches of the noble elms.

Mrs. Chandos-Fane had time to unpack all her dresses, and Winifred to settle down to her work, before the shutters of The Limes were opened and the butcher's boy and the baker's drove their carts with greater importance for the knowledge that "Sir John" had returned.

(*To be continued.*)

THE EBONY BOX.

NO T for a long while had Worcester been stirred as it was over this affair of Samson Dene's. What with the curious discovery of the box of guineas after its mysterious disappearance of years, and then its second no less mysterious loss, with the suspicion that Sam Dene stole it, the Faithful City was so excited as hardly to know whether it stood on its head or its heels.

When the police searched the prisoner on Thursday morning, after taking him into custody, and found the guinea upon him (having been told that he had one about him), his guilt was thought to be as good as proved. Sam said the guinea was his own, an heirloom, and stood to this so indignantly resolute that the police let him have it back. But now, what did Sam go and do? When released upon bail by the magistrates—to come up again on the Saturday—he went straight off to a silversmith's, had a hole stamped in the guinea and hung it to his watch-chain across his waistcoat, that the public might feast their eyes upon it. It was in this spirit of defiance—or, as the town called it, bravado—that he met the charge. His lodgings had been searched for the rest of the guineas, but they were not found.

The hour for the Saturday's examination—twelve o'clock—was striking, as I struggled my way with Austin Chance through the crush round the Guildhall. But that Austin's father was a man of consequence with the door-keepers, we should not have got in at all.

The accused, arraigned by his full name, Samson Reginald Dene, stood in the place allotted to prisoners, cold defiance on his handsome face. As near to him as might be permitted, stood Tod, just as defiant as he. Captain Charles Cockermuth, a third in defiance, stood opposite to prosecute; while Lawyer Cockermuth, who came in with Sam's uncle, Mr. Jacobson, openly wished his brother at Hanover. Squire Todhetley, being a county magistrate, sat on the bench with the City magnates, but not to interfere.

The proceedings began. Captain Cockermuth related how the little box, his property, containing sixty golden guineas, was left on the table in a sitting-room in his brother's house, the accused being the only person in the room at the time, and that the box disappeared. He, himself (standing at the front door), saw the accused quit the room; he went into it almost immediately, but the box was gone. He swore that no person entered the room after the prisoner left it.

Miss Betty Cockermuth, flustered and red, appeared next. She testified that she was in the room nearly all the morning, the little box being upon the table; when she left the room, Mr. Dene remained in it alone, copying a letter for her brother; the box was still on the table. Susan Edwards, housemaid at Lawyer Cockermuth's,

spoke to the same fact. It was she who had fetched her mistress out, and she saw the box standing upon the table.

The accused was asked by one of the magistrates what he had to say to this. He answered, speaking freely, that he had nothing to say in contradiction, except that he did not know what became of the box.

"Did you see the box on the table?" asked the lawyer on the opposite side, Mr. Standup.

"I saw it there when I first went into the room. Miss Betty made a remark about the box, which drew my attention to it. I was sitting at the far end of the room, at Mr. Cockermuth's little desk-table. I did not notice the box afterwards."

"Did you not see it there after Miss Cockermuth left the room?"

"No, I did not; not that I remember," answered Sam. "Truth to say, I never thought about it. My attention was confined to the letter I was copying, to the exclusion of everything else."

"Did anybody come into the room after Miss Cockermuth left it?"

"Nobody came into it. Somebody opened the door and looked in."

This was fresh news. The town-hall pricked up its ears.

"I do not know who it was," added Sam. "My head was bent over my writing, when the door opened quickly, and as quickly shut again. I supposed somebody had looked in to see if Mr. or Miss Cockermuth was there, and had retreated on finding they were not."

"Could that person, whomsoever it might be, have advanced to the table and taken the box?" asked the chief of the magistrates.

"No, sir. For certain, no!"—and Sam's tone here, he best knew why, was aggravatingly defiant. "The person might have put his head in—and no doubt did—but he did not set a foot inside the room."

Captain Cockermuth was asked about this: whether he observed anybody go to the parlour and look in. He protested till he was nearly blue with rage (for he regarded it as Sam's invention), that such a thing never took place, that nobody whatever went near the parlour door.

Next came up the question of the guinea, which was hanging from his watch-guard, shining and bold as if it had been brass. Sam had been questioned about this by the justices on Thursday, and his statement in answer to them was just as bold as the coin.

The guinea had been given him by his late father's uncle, Old Thomas Dene, who had jokingly enjoined him never to change it, always to keep it by him, and then he would never be without money. Sam had kept it; kept it from that time to this. He kept it in the pocket of an old-fashioned leather case, which contained some letters from his father, and two or three other things he valued. No, he was not in the habit of getting the guinea out to look at, he had retorted to a little badgering; had not looked at it (or at the case either, which lay in the bottom of his trunk) for months and months—yes, it might be years, for all he recollects. But on the Tuesday evening,

when talking with Miss Parslet about guineas, he fetched it to show to her ; and slipped it into his pocket afterwards, where the police found it on the Thursday. This was the substance of his first answer, and he repeated it now.

"Do you know who is said to be the father of lies, young man ?" asked Justice Whitewicker in a solemn tone, suspecting that the prisoner was telling an out-and-out fable.

"I have heard," answered Sam. "Have never seen him myself. Perhaps you have, sir." At which a titter went round the court, and it put his worship's back up. Sam went on to say that he had often thought of taking his guinea into wear and had now done it. And he gave the guinea a flick in the face of us all.

Evidently little good could come of a hardened criminal like this ; and Justice Whitewicker, who thought nothing on earth so grand as the sound of his own voice from the bench, gave Sam a piece of his mind. In the midst of this a stir arose at the appearance of Maria Parslet. Mr. Chance led her in ; her father, sad and shrinking as usual, walked behind them. Lawyer Cockermuth—and I liked him for it—made a place for his clerk next to himself. Maria looked modest, gentle and pretty. She wore black silk, being in slight mourning, and a dainty white bonnet.

Mr. Dene was asked to take tea with them in the parlour on the Tuesday evening, as a matter of convenience, Maria's evidence ran, in answer to questions, and she briefly alluded to the reason why. Whilst waiting together, he and she, for her father to come in, Mr. Dene told her of the finding of the ebony box of guineas at Mr. Cockermuth's. She laughingly remarked that a guinea was an out-of-date coin now, and she was not sure that she had ever seen one. In reply to that, Mr. Dene said he had one by him, given him by an old uncle some years before ; and he went up stairs and brought it down to show to her. There could be no mistake, Maria added to Mr. Whitewicker, who wanted to insinuate a word of doubt, and her sweet brown eyes were honest and true as she said it ; she had touched the guinea and held it in her hand for some moments.

"Held it and touched it, did you, Miss Parslet ?" retorted Lawyer Standup. "Pray what appearance had it ?"

"It was a thin, worn coin, sir," replied Maria ; "thinner, I think, than a sovereign, but somewhat larger ; it seemed to be worn thin at the edge."

"Whose image was on it ?—what king's ?"

"George the Third's. I noticed that."

"Now don't you think, young lady, that the accused took this marvellous coin from his pocket, instead of from some receptacle above stairs ?" went on Mr. Standup.

"I am quite sure he did not take it from his pocket when before me," answered Maria. "He ran up stairs quickly, saying he would fetch the guinea : he had nothing in his hands then."

Upon this Lawyer Chance inquired of his learned brother why he need waste time in useless questions ; begging to remind him that it was not until Wednesday morning the box disappeared, so the prisoner could not well have had any of its contents about him on Tuesday.

"Just let my questions alone, will you," retorted Mr. Standup, with a nod. "I know what I am about.—Now, Miss Parslet, please attend to me. Was the guinea you profess to have seen a perfect coin, or was there a hole in it ?"

"It was a perfect coin, sir."

"And what became of it ?"

"I think Mr. Dene put it in his waistcoat pocket : I did not particularly notice. Quite close upon that, my father came home and we sat down to tea. No, sir, nothing was said to my father about the guinea ; if it was, I did not hear it. But he and Mr. Dene talked of the box of guineas that had been found."

"Who was it that called while you were at tea ?"

"Young Mr. Chance called. We had finished tea then, and Mr. Dene took him upstairs to his own sitting-room."

"I am not asking you about young Mr. Chance ; we shall come to him presently," was the rough-toned, but not ill-natured retort. "Somebody else called : who was it ?"

Maria, blushing and paling ever since she stood up to the ordeal, grew white now. Mr. Badger had called at the door, she answered, and Mr. Dene went out to speak to him. Worried by Lawyer Standup as to whether he did not come to ask for money, she said she believed so, but she did not hear all they said.

Quiet Mr. Parslet was the next witness. He had to acknowledge that he did hear it. Mr. Badger appeared to be pressing for some money owing to him ; could not tell the amount, knew nothing about that. When questioned whether the accused owed him money, Parslet said not a shilling ; Mr. Dene had never sought to borrow of him, and had paid his monthly accounts regularly.

Upon that, Mr. Badger was produced ; a thin man with a neck as stiff as a poker ; who gave his reluctant testimony in a sweet tone of benevolence. Mr. Dene had been borrowing money from him for some time ; somewhere about twenty pounds, he thought, was owing now, including interest. He had repeatedly asked for its repayment, but only got put off with (as he believed) lame excuses. Had certainly gone to ask for it on the Tuesday evening ; was neither loud nor angry, oh, dear no ; but did tell the accused he thought he could give him some if he would, and did say that he must have a portion of it within a week, or he should apply to Mr. Jacobson, of Elm Farm. Did not really mean to apply to Mr. Jacobson, had no wish to do anyone an injury, but felt vexed at the young man's off-handedness, which looked like indifference. Knew besides that Mr. Dene had other debts.

Now I'll leave you to judge how this evidence struck on the ears of old Jacobson. He leaped to the conclusion that Sam had been going all sorts of ways, as he supposed he went when in London, and might be owing, the mischief only knew how much money ; and he shook his fist at Sam across the justice room.

Mr. Standup next called young Chance, quite to young Chance's surprise ; perhaps also to his father's. He was questioned upon no end of things—whether he did not know that the accused was owing a great deal of money, and whether the accused had shown any guinea to him when he was in Edgar Street on the Tuesday night. Austin answered that he believed Mr. Dene owed a little money, not a great deal, so far as he knew ; and that he had not seen the guinea or heard of it. And in saying all this, Austin's tone was just as resentfully insolent to Mr. Standup as he dared to make it.

Well, it is of no use to go on categorically with the day's proceedings. When they came to an end, the magistrates conferred pretty hotly in a low tone amongst themselves, some apparently taking up one opinion, as to Sam's guilt, or non-guilt, and some the other. At length they announced their decision, and it was as follows.

"Although the case undoubtedly presents grave grounds of suspicion against the accused, Samson Reginald Dene—'Very grave indeed,' interjected Mr. Whitewicker, solemnly—we do not consider them to be sufficient to commit him for trial upon ; therefore, we give him the benefit of the doubt, and discharge him. Should any further evidence transpire, he can be brought up again."

"It was Maria Parslet's testimony about the guinea that cleared him," whispered the crowd, as they filed out.

And I think it must have been. It was just impossible to doubt her truth, or the earnestness with which she gave it.

Mr. Jacobson "interviewed" Sam, as the Americans say, and the interview was not a loving one. Being in the mood, he said anything that came uppermost. He forbade Sam to appear at Elm Farm ever again, as "long as oak and ash grew ;" and he added that as Sam was bent on going to the Deuce head foremost, he might do it upon his own means, but that he'd never get any more help from him.

The way the Squire lashed up Bob and Blister when driving home—for, liking Sam hitherto, he was just as much put out as old Jacobson—and the duet they kept up together in abuse of his misdeeds, was edifying to hear. Tod laughed ; I did not. The gig was given over this return journey to the two grooms.

"I do not believe Sam took the box, sir," I said to old Jacobson, interrupting a fiery oration.

He turned round to stare at me. "What do you say, Johnny Ludlow ? You do not believe he took the box?"

"Well, to me it seems quite plain that he did not take it. I've hardly ever felt more sure of anything."

"Plain!" struck in the Squire. "How is it plain, Johnny? What grounds do you go upon?"

"I judge by his looks and his tones, sir, when denying it. They are to be trusted."

They did not know whether to laugh or scoff at me. It was Johnny's way, said the Squire; always fancying he could read the riddles in a man's face and voice. But they'd have thrown up their two best market-going hats with glee to be able to think it true.

II.

SAMSON REGINALD DENE was relieved of the charge, as it was declared "not proven;" all the same, Samson Reginald Dene was ruined. Worcester said so. During the following week, which was Passion week, its citizens talked more of him than of their prayers.

Granted that Maria Parslet's testimony had been honestly genuine, a theory cropped up to counteract it. Lawyer Standup had been bold enough to start it at the Saturday's examination: a hundred tongues were repeating it now. Sam Dene, as may be remembered, was present at the finding of the box on Tuesday; he had come up the passage and touched the golden guineas in it with the tips of his fingers: those fingers might have deftly extracted one of the coins. No wonder he could show it to Maria when he went home to tea! Captain Cockermuth admitted that in counting the guineas subsequently he had thought he counted sixty; but, as he knew there were (or ought to be) that number in the box, probably the assumption misled him, causing him to reckon them as sixty when in fact there were only fifty-nine. Which was a bit of logic.

Still, popular opinion was divided. If part of the town judged Sam to be guilty, part believed him to be innocent. A good deal might be said on both sides. To a young man who does not know how to pay his debts from lack of means, and debts that he is afraid of, too, sixty golden guineas may be a great temptation; and people did not shut their eyes to that. It transpired also that Mr. Jacobson, his own uncle, his best friend, had altogether cast Sam off and told him he might now go to the dogs his own way.

Sam resented it all bitterly, and defied the world. Far from giving in or showing any sense of shame, he walked about with an air, his head up, and that brazen guinea dangling in front of him. He actually had the face to appear at college on Good Friday (the congregation looking askance at him) and sat out the cold service of the day: no singing, no organ, and the little chorister-boys in black surplices instead of white ones.

But the crowning act of boldness was to come. Before Easter week had lapsed into the past, Sam Dene had taken two rooms in a conspicuous part of the town and set-up in practice. A big brass plate on the outer door displayed his name: "Mr. Dene, Attorney-at-law."

Sam's friends extolled his courage ; Sam's enemies were amazed at his impudence. Captain Cockermuth prophesied that the ceiling of that office would come tumbling down on its crafty occupant's head : it was *his* gold that was paying for it.

The Cockermuths, like the town, were divided in opinion. Mr. Cockermuth could not believe Sam guilty, although the mystery of where the box could be puzzled him as few things had ever puzzled him in this life. He would fain have taken Sam back again, had it been a right thing to do. What the Captain thought need not be enlarged upon. While Miss Betty felt uncertain ; veering now to this belief, now to that, and much distressed either way.

There is one friend in this world that hardly ever deserts us—and that is a mother. Mrs. Dene, a pretty little woman yet, had come flying to Worcester, ready to fight everybody in it on her son's behalf. Sam of course made his own tale good to her ; whether it was a true one or not he alone knew, but not an angel from heaven could have stirred her faith in it. She declared that, to her positive knowledge, the old uncle had given Sam the guinea.

It was understood to be Mrs. Dene who advanced the money to Sam to set up with ; it was certainly Mrs. Dene who bought a shutting-up bed (at old Ward's), and a gridiron, and a tea-pot, and a three-legged table, and a chair or two, all for the back room of the little office, that Sam might go into housekeeping on his own account, and live upon sixpence a day, so to say, until business came in. To look at Sam's hopeful face, he meant to do it, and to live down the scandal.

Looking at the thing impartially, one might perhaps see that Sam was not swayed by impudence in setting-up, so much as by obligation. For what else lay open to him?—no firm would engage him as clerk with that doubt sticking to his coat-tails. He paid some of his debts, and undertook to pay the rest before the year was out. A whisper arose that it was Mrs. Dene who managed this. Sam's adversaries knew better ; the funds came out of the ebony box : that, as Charles Cockermuth demonstrated, was as sure as heaven.

But now there occurred one thing that I, Johnny Ludlow, could not understand, and never shall : why Worcester should have turned its back, like an angry drake, upon Maria Parslet. The school, where she was resident teacher, wrote her a cool, polite note, to say she need not trouble herself to return after the Easter recess. That example was followed. Pious individuals looked upon her as a possible story-teller, in danger of going to the bad in Sam's defence, nearly as much as Sam had gone.

It was just a craze. Even Charles Cockermuth said there was no sense in blaming Maria : of course Sam had deceived her (when pretending to show the guinea as his own), just as he deceived other people. Next the town called her "bold" for standing up in the face and eyes of the Guildhall to give her evidence. But how could

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Maria help that? It was not her own choice: she'd rather have locked herself up in the cellar. Lawyer Chance had burst in upon her that Saturday morning (not ten minutes after we left the house), giving nobody warning, and carried her off imperatively, never saying "Will you, or Won't you?" It was not his way.

Placid Miss Betty was indignant when the injustice came to her ears. What did people mean by it, she wanted to know. She sent for Maria to spend the next Sunday in Foregate Street, and marched with her arm-in-arm to church (St. Nicholas'), morning and evening.

As the days and the weeks passed, commotion gave place to a calm; Sam and his delinquencies were let alone. One cannot be on the grumble for ever. Sam's lines were pretty hard; practice held itself aloof from him; and if he did not live upon the sixpence a day, he looked at every halfpenny that he had to spend beyond it. His face grew thin, his blue eyes wistful, but he smiled hopefully.

"You keep up young Dene's acquaintance, I perceive," remarked Lawyer Chance to his son one evening as they were finishing dinner, for he had met the two young men together that day.

"Yes: why shouldn't I?" returned Austin.

"Think that charge was a mistaken one, I suppose?"

"Well I do, father. He has affirmed it to me in terms so unmistakable that I can but believe him. Besides, I don't think Dene, as I have always said, is the sort of fellow to turn rogue: I don't, indeed."

"Does he get any practice?"

"Very little, I'm afraid."

Mr. Chance was a man with a conscience. On the whole, he felt inclined to think Sam had not helped himself to the guineas, but he was by no means sure of it: like Miss Betty Cockermuth his opinion veered, now on this side, now on that, like a haunted weathercock. If Sam was not guilty, why, then, Fate had dealt hardly with the young fellow—and what would the end be? These thoughts were running through the lawyer's mind as he talked to his son and sat playing with his bunch of seals, which hung down by a short, thick gold chain, in the old-fashioned manner.

"I should like to say a word to him if he'd come to me," he suddenly cried. "You might go and bring him, Austin."

"What—this evening?" exclaimed Austin.

"Ay; why not. One time's as good as another."

Austin Chance started off promptly for the new office, and found his friend presiding over his own tea-tray in the little back room; the loaf and butter on the table, and a red herring on the gridiron.

"Hadn't time to get any dinner to day; too busy," was Sam's apology, given briefly with a flush of the face.—"Mr. Chance want's me? Well, I'll come. What is it for?"

"Don't know," replied Austin. And away they went.

The lawyer was standing at the window, his hands in the pockets of his pepper-and-salt trousers, tinkling the shillings and sixpences there. Austin supposed he was not wanted, and shut them in.

"I have been thinking of your case a good bit lately, Sam Dene," began Mr. Chance, giving Sam a seat and sitting down himself; "and I should like to feel, if I can, more at a certainty about it, one way or the other."

"Yes, sir," replied Sam. And you must please to note that manners in those days had not degenerated to what they are in these. Young men, whether gentle or simple, addressed their elders with respect; young women also. "Yes, sir," replied Sam. "But what do you mean about wishing to feel more at a certainty?"

"When I defended you before the magistrates, I did my best to convince them that you were not guilty: you had assured me you were not: and they discharged you. I believe my arguments and my pleadings went some way with them."

"I have no doubt of it, sir, and I thanked you at the time with all my heart," said Sam warmly. "Some of my enemies were bitter enough against me."

"But you should not speak in that way—calling people your enemies!" reproved the lawyer. "People were only at enmity with you on the score of the offence. Look here, Sam Dene—did you commit it, or did you not?"

Sam stared. Mr. Chance had dropped his voice to a solemn key, his head was pushed forward, gravity sat on his face.

"No, sir. No."

The short answer did not satisfy the lawyer. "Did you filch that box of guineas out of Cockermuth's room; or were you, and are you, as you assert, wholly innocent?" he resumed. "Tell me the truth as before heaven. Whatever it be, I will shield you still."

Sam rose. "On my sacred word, sir, and before heaven, I have told nothing but the truth. I did not take, or touch the box of guineas. I do not know what became of it."

Mr. Chance regarded Sam in silence. He had known young men, when under a cloud, prevaricate in a most extraordinary and unblushing manner: to look at them and listen to them, one might have said they were fit to be canonised. But he thought truth lay with Sam now.

"Sit down, sit down, Dene," he said. "I am glad to believe you. Where the deuce could the box have got to? It could not take flight through the ceiling up to the clouds, or down to the earth through the floor. *Whose hands took it?*"

"The box went in one of two ways," returned Sam. "If the Captain did not fetch it out unconsciously, and lose it in the street, why somebody must have entered the parlour after I left it and carried off the box. Perhaps the individual who looked into the room when I was sitting there."

"A pity but you had noticed who that was."

"Yes, it is. Look here, Mr. Chance; a thought has more than once struck me—if that person did not come back and take the box, why has he not come forward openly and honestly to avow it was himself who looked in?"

The lawyer gave his head a dissenting shake. "It is a ticklish thing to be mixed up in, he may think, one that he had best keep out of—though he may be innocent as the day.—How are you getting on?" he asked, passing abruptly from the subject.

"Oh, middling," replied Sam. "As well, perhaps, as I could expect to get on at first, with all the prejudice abroad against me."

"Earning bread-and-cheese?"

"Not quite—yet."

"Well, see here, Dene—and this is what I chiefly sent for you to say, if you could assure me on your conscience you deserved it—I may be able to put some little business in your hands. Petty matters are brought to us that we hardly care to waste time upon: I'll send them to you in future. I dare say you'll be able to rub on by dint of patience. Rome was not built in a day, you know."

"Thank you, sir: I thank you very truly," breathed Sam. "Mr. Cockermuth sent me a small matter the other day. If I can make a bare living of it at present, that's all I ask. Fame and fortune are not rained down upon black sheep."

Which was so true a remark as to need no contradiction.

May was nearing its close then, and the summer evenings were long and lovely. As Sam went forth from the interview, he thought he would take a walk by the river, instead of turning in to his solitary rooms. Since entering upon them he had been as steady as old Time: the accusation and its attendant shame seemed to have converted him from a heedless, youthful man into a wise old sage of age and care. Passing down Broad Street towards the bridge, he turned to the left and sauntered along beside the Severn. The water glittered in the light of the setting sun; barges, some of them bearing men and women and children, passed smoothly up and down on it; the opposite fields, towards St. John's, were green as an emerald: all things seemed to wear an aspect of brightness.

All on a sudden things grew brighter—and Sam's pulses gave a startling leap. He had passed the grand old red-stoned wall that enclosed the Bishop's palace, and was close upon the gates leading up to the Green, when a young lady turned out of them and came towards him with a light, quick step. It was Maria Parslet, in a pretty summer muslin, a straw hat shading her blushing face. For it did blush furiously at sight of Sam.

"Mr. Dene!"

"Maria!"

She began to say, hurriedly, that her mother had sent her with a message to the dressmaker on the Parade, and she had taken

that way, as being the shortest—as if in apology for having met Sam.

He turned with her, and they paced slowly along side by side, the colour on Maria's cheeks coming and going with every word he spoke and every look he gave her—which seemed altogether senseless and unreasonable. Sam told her of his conversation with Austin Chance's father, and his promise to put a few things in his way.

"Once let me be making two hundred a year, Maria, and then ——"

"Then what?" questioned Maria innocently.

"Then I should ask you to come to me, and we'd risk it together."

"Risk what?" stammered Maria, turning her head right round to watch a barge that was being towed by.

"Risk our luck. Two hundred a year is not so bad to begin upon. I should take the floor above as well as the ground floor I rent now, and we should get along. Anyway, I hope to try it."

"Oh, Mr. Dene!"

"Now doh't you 'Mr. Dene' me, young lady, if you please. Why, Maria, what else can we do? A mean, malicious set of dogs and cats have turned their backs upon us both; the least we should do is to see if we can't do without them. I know you'd rather come to me than stay in Edgar Street."

Maria held her tongue, as to whether she would or not. "Mamma is negotiating to get me a situation at Cheltenham," she said.

"You will not go to Cheltenham, or anywhere else, if I get any luck," he replied dictatorially. "Life would look very blue to me now without you, Maria. And many a man and wife, rolling in riches at the end, have rubbed on with less than two hundred a year at the beginning. I'd not say, mind, but we might risk it on a hundred and fifty. My rent is low, you see."

"Ye—es," stammered Maria. "But—I wish that mystery of the guineas could be cleared up!"

Sam stood still, turned, and faced her. "Why do you say *that?* You are not suspecting that I took them?"

"Oh, dear, no," returned Maria, losing her breath. "I *know* you did not take them: could not. I was only thinking of your practice: so much more would come in."

"Cockermuth has sent me a small matter or two. I think I shall get on," repeated Sam.

They were at their journey's end by that time, at the dressmaker's door. "Good evening," said Maria, timidly holding out her hand.

Sam Dene took it and clasped it. "Good-bye, my darling. I am going home to my bread-and-cheese supper, and I wish you were there to eat it with me!"

Maria sighed. She wondered whether that wonderful state of things would ever come to pass. Perhaps not; perhaps yes. Meanwhile no living soul knew aught of these treasonable aspirations; they were a secret between her and Sam. Mr. and Mrs. Parslet suspected nothing.

Time went on. Lawyer Chance was as good as his word, and put a few small matters of business into the hands of Sam Dene. Mr. Cockermuth did the same. The town came down upon him for it; though it let Chance alone, who was not the sort of man to be dictated to. "Well," said Cockermuth in answer, "I don't believe the lad is guilty; never have believed it. Had he been of a dishonest turn, he could have helped himself before, for a good deal of my cash passed at times through his hands. And, given that he was innocent, he has been hardly dealt by."

Sam Dene was grateful for these stray windfalls, and returned his best thanks to the lawyers for them. But they did not amount to much in the aggregate; and a gloomy vision began to present itself to his apprehension of being forced to give up the struggle, and wandering out in the world to seek a better fortune. The summer assizes drew near. Sam had no grand cause to come on at them, or small one either; but it was impossible not to give a thought now and again to what his fate might have been, had he stood committed to take his trial at them. The popular voice said that was only what he merited.

III.

THE assizes were held, and passed. One hot day, when July was nearing its meridian, word was brought to Miss Cockermuth—who was charitable—that a poor sick woman whom she befriended, was worse than usual, so she put on her bonnet and cloak to pay her a visit. The bonnet was a huge Leghorn, which shaded her face well from the sun, its trimming of straw colour; and the cloak was of thin black "taffeta," edged with narrow lace. It was a long walk on a hot afternoon, for the sick woman lived but just on this side Henwick. Miss Betty had got as far as the bridge, and was about to cross it when Sam Dene, coming over it at a strapping pace, ran against her.

"Miss Betty!" he cried. "I beg your pardon."

Miss Betty brought her bonnet from under the shade of her large grass-green parasol. "Dear me, is it you, Sam Dene?" she said. "Were you walking for a wager?"

Sam laughed a little. "I was hastening back to my office, Miss Betty. I have no clerk, you know, and a client *might* come in."

Miss Betty gave her head a twist, something between a nod and a shake; she noticed the doubtful tone in the "*might*." "Very hot, isn't it?" said she. "I'm going up to see that poor Hester Knowles; she's uncommon bad, I hear."

"You'll have a warm walk."

"Ay. Are you pretty well, Sam? You look thin."

"Do I? Oh, that's nothing but the heat of the weather. I am quite well, thank you. Good afternoon, Miss Betty."

She shook his hand heartily. One of Sam's worst enemies, who

might have run in a curriicle with Charles Cockermuth, as to an out-and-out belief in his guilt, was passing at the moment, and saw it.

Miss Betty crossed the bridge, turned off into Turkey, for it was through those classical regions that her nearest and coolest way lay, and so onwards to the sick woman's room. There she found the blazing July sun streaming in at the wide window, which had no blind, no shelter whatever from it. Miss Betty had had enough of the sun out of doors, without having it in. Done up with the walk and the heat, she sat down on the first chair, and felt fit to swoon right off.

"Dear me, Hester, this is bad for you!" she gasped.

"Do you mean the sun, ma'am?" asked the sick woman, who was sitting full in it, wrapped in a blanket or two. "It is a little hot just now, but I don't grumble at it; I'm so cold mostly. As soon as the sun goes off the window, I shall begin to shiver."

"Well-a-day!" responded Miss Betty, wishing she could be cool enough to shiver. "But if you feel it cold now, Hester, what will you do when the autumn winds come on?"

"Ah, ma'am, please do not talk of it! I just can't tell what I shall do. That window don't fit tight, and the way the wind pours in through it upon me as I sit here at evening, or lie in my little bed there, passes belief. I'm coughing always then."

"You should have some good thick curtains put up," said Miss Betty, gazing at the bare window, which had a pot of musk on its sill. "Woollen ones."

The sick woman smiled sadly. She was very poor now, though it had not always been so; she might as well have hoped to buy the sun itself as woollen curtains—or cotton curtains either. Miss Betty knew that.

"I'll think about it, Hester, and see if I've got any old ones that I could let you have. I'm not sure; but I'll look," repeated she—and began to empty her capacious dimity pockets of a few items of good things she had brought.

By-and-by, when she was a little cooler and had talked with Hester, Miss Betty set off home again, her mind running upon the half-promised curtains. "They are properly shabby," thought she, as she went along, "but they'll serve to keep the sun and the wind off her."

She was thinking of those warm green curtains that she had picked the braid from that past disastrous morning—as the reader heard of, and all the town as well. Nothing had been done with them since.

Getting home, Miss Betty turned into the parlour. Susan—who had not yet found leisure to fix any time for her wedding—found her mistress fanning her hot face, her bonnet untied and tilted back.

"I've been to see that poor Hester Knowles, Susan," began Miss Betty.

"Law, ma'am!" interposed Susan. "What a walk for you this scorching afternoon! All up that wide New Road!"

"You may well say that, girl: but I went Turkey way. She's very

ill, poor thing ; and that's a frightfully staring window of hers, the sun on it like a blazing sheet of fire, and not as much as a rag for a blind ; and the window don't fit, she says, and in cold weather the biting wind comes in and shivers her up. I think I might give her those shabby old curtains, Susan—that were up in Mr. Philip's room, you know, before we got the new chintz ones in."

"So you might, ma'am," said Susan, who was not a bad-hearted girl, except to the baker's man. "They can't go up at any of our windows as they be ; and if you had 'em dyed, I don't know as they'd answer much, being so shabby."

"I put them—let me see—into the spare ottoman, didn't I ? Yes, that was it. And there I suppose they must be lying still."

"Sure enough, Miss Betty," said Susan. "I've not touched 'em."

"Nor I," said Miss Betty. "With all the trouble that got into our house at that time, I couldn't give my mind to seeing after the old things, and I've not thought about them since. Come up stairs with me now, Susan ; we'll see what sort of a state they are in."

They went up ; and Miss Betty took off her bonnet and cloak and put her cap on. The spare ottoman, soft, and red, and ancient, used as a receptacle for odds and ends that were not wanted, stood in a spacious linen-closet on the first floor landing. It was built out over the back door, and had a skylight above. Susan threw back the lid of the ottoman, and Miss Betty stood by. The faded old brown curtains, green once, lay in a heap at one end, just as Miss Betty had hastily flung them in that past day in March, when on her way to look at the chintzes.

"They're in a fine rabble, seemingly," observed Susan, pausing to regard the curtains.

"Dear me !" cried Miss Betty, conscience-stricken, for she was a careful housewife, "I let them drop in any way, I remember. I did mean to have them well-shaken out of doors and properly folded, but that bother drove it all out of my head. Take them out, girl."

Susan put her strong arms underneath the heap and lifted it out with a fling. Something heavy flew out of the curtains, and dropped on the boarded floor with a crash. Letting fall the curtains, Susan gave a wild shriek of terror and Miss Betty gave a wilder, for the floor was suddenly covered with shining gold coins. Mr. Cockermuth, passing across the passage below at the moment, heard the cries, wondered whether the house was on fire, and came hastening up.

"Oh," said he coolly, taking-in the aspect of affairs. "So the thief was you, Betty, after all !"

He picked up the ebony box, and bent his head to look at the guineas. Miss Betty sank down on a three-legged stool—brought in for Philip's children—and grew whiter than death.

Yes, it was the missing box of guineas, come to light in the same extraordinary and unexpected manner that it had come before, without having been (as may be said) truly lost. When Miss Betty

gathered her curtains off the dining-room table that March morning, a cumbersome and weighty heap, she had unwittingly gathered up the box with them. No wonder Sam Dene had not seen the box on the table after Miss Betty's departure ! It was a grievous misfortune, though, that he failed to take notice it was not there.

She had no idea she was not speaking truth in saying she *saw* the box on the table as she left the room. Having seen the box there all the morning she thought it was there still and that she saw it, being quite unconscious that it was in her arms. Susan, too, had noticed the box on the table when she opened the door to call her mistress, and believed she was correct in saying she saw it there to the last : the real fact being that she had not observed it was gone. So there the box with its golden freight had lain undisturbed, hidden in the folds of the curtains. But for Hester Knowles's defective window, it might have stayed there still, who can say how long ?

Susan, no less scared than her mistress, stood back against the closet wall for safety, out of reach of those diabolical coins ; Miss Betty, groaning and half-fainting on the three-legged stool, sat pushing back her cap and her front. The lawyer picked up the guineas and counted them as he laid them flat in the box. Sixty of them : not one missing. So Sam's guinea *was* his own ! He had not, as Worcester whispered, trumped up the story with Maria Parslet.

"John," gasped poor Miss Betty, beside herself with remorse and terror, "John, what will become of me now ? Will anything be done ?"

"How 'done'?" asked he.

"Will they bring me to trial—or anything of that—in poor Sam's place?"

"Well, I don't know," answered her brother grimly : "perhaps not this time. But I'd have you take more care in future, Betty, than to hide away gold in old curtains."

Locking the box securely within his iron safe, Mr. Cockermuth put on his hat and went down to the town hall, where the magistrates, after dispensing their wisdom, were about to disperse for the day. He told them of the wonderful recovery of the box of guineas, of how it had been lost, and that Sam Dene was wholly innocent. Their worships were of course charmed to hear it, Mr. Whitewicker observing that they had only judged Sam by appearances, and that appearances had been sufficient (in theory) to hang him.

From the town hall, Mr. Cockermuth turned off to Sam's office. Sam was making a great show of business, surrounded by a tableful of imposing parchments, but with never a client to the fore. His old master grasped his hand.

"Well, Sam, my boy," he said, "the tables have turned for you. That box of guineas is found."

Sam never spoke an answering word. His lips parted with expectation ; his breath seemed to be a little short.

"Betty had got it all the time. She managed somehow to pick it

up off the table with those wretched old curtains she had there, all unconsciously, of course, and it has lain hidden with the curtains upstairs in a lumber box ever since. Betty will never forgive herself. She'll get a fit of the jaundice over this."

Sam drew a long breath. "You will let the public know, sir?"

"Ay, Sam, without loss of an hour. I've begun with the magistrates—and a fine sensation the news made amid 'em, I can tell you; and now I'm going round to the newspapers; and I shall go over to Elm Farm the first thing to-morrow. The town took up the cause against you, Sam: take care it does not eat you now in its repentance. Look here, you'll have to come round to Betty, or she'll wail her heart out: you won't bear malice, Sam?"

"No, that I won't," said Sam warmly. "Miss Betty did not bear it to me. She has been as kind as can be all along."

The town did want to eat Sam.—It is the custom of the true Briton to go to extremes. Being unable to shake Sam's hands quite off, the city would fain have chaired him round the streets with honours, as it used to chair its newly-returned members.

Captain Cockermuth, sent for post haste, came to Worcester all contrition, beseeching Sam to forgive him fifty times a day, and wanting to press the box of guineas upon him as a peace-offering. Sam would not take it: he laughingly told the Captain that the box did not seem to carry luck with it.

And then Sam's troubles were over. And no objection was made by his people (as it otherwise might have been) to his marrying Maria Parslet, by way of recompense. "God never fails to bring good out of evil, my dear," said old Mrs. Jacobson to Maria, the first time they had got her on a visit at Elm Farm. As to Sam, he had short time for Elm Farm, or anything else in the shape of recreation. Practice was flowing in quickly: litigants arguing, one with another, that a young man, lying for months under an imputation of theft, and then coming out of it with flying colours, must needs be a clever lawyer.

"But, Johnny," Sam said to me, when talking of the past, "there's one thing I would alter if I made the laws. No person, so long as he is only suspected of crime, should have his name proclaimed publicly. I am not speaking of murder, you understand, or charges of that grave nature; but of such a case as mine. My name appeared in full, in all the local newspapers, Samson Reginald Dene, coupled with theft, and of course it got a mark upon it. It is an awful blight upon a man when he is innocent, one that he may never quite live down. Suspicions must arise, I know that, of the innocent as well as the guilty, and they must undergo preliminary examinations in public and submit to legal inquiries: but time enough to proclaim who the man is when evidence strengthens against him, and he is committed for trial: until then let his name be suppressed. At least that is my opinion."

And it is mine as well as Sam's.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

THE CRUISE OF THE RESERVE SQUADRON.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD,

AUTHOR OF "THROUGH HOLLAND," "IN THE BLACK FOREST," ETC.

ONCE in Arosa Bay, everything approaching to a Northern climate had disappeared. The heat, indeed, was intense, the roads were inches thick in dust, the long stretch of flat shore looked white and broiling in the sunshine. Here and there, in our walks, we encountered the grateful shade of a small plantation of trees; and, at intervals, the eucalyptus, though casting little shadow, broke the extreme fervour of the glare.

Yet the Spanish women braved the noonday heat with no other covering to their heads than the graceful mantilla. Many, indeed, disdained even that small protection, and seemed to think nothing of the scorching rays, that we, sheltered by umbrellas, found it so hard to endure with serenity of mind.

The town is called Carril. It is a seaport of some little consequence, being the nearest to Santiago, and in direct railway communication with that venerable city. Carril is divided into two distinct portions, separated from each other by more than a mile of hot, straight, dusty white road: if, indeed, both settlements were called Carril — a point I never ascertained with complete accuracy. Carril proper was in itself small, rather dilapidated-looking, yet not unpicturesque. These foreign towns seldom are unpicturesque; they possess details of colouring and arrangement, all seen through a rarified atmosphere, that we in England know nothing about, might sigh for in vain, and in vain attempt to imitate. The houses were small and sufficiently homely; only one here and there, such as the custom-house on the quay, rising to anything of importance. Most of the green Venetian shutters were closed against the heat; but the lower half was made to lift up; and a dark-eyed Spanish beauty looked more captivating than ever, as, from these picture-frames, she dispensed abroad the favour of her glances.

It was from such a coign of vantage that Captain Pyramid received his magnificent lily, which he afterwards pressed between the leaves of the Sanskrit volume so often in his hands in the ward-room. The sight of it would cast a halo upon that not very romantic labour, and spur him on to fresh triumphs, as he quietly assured me. He would now and then get laughed at by one or the other on the score of sentiment; but they who laughed were actuated by burning jealousy much more than by the spirit of fun. Van Stoker, whose mind was filled with one image, and one image alone, left him in peace; felt for him, indeed, much sympathy; offered him—with a

deliberate incremation, so to say, of his tenderest feelings one could but admire—a few of his sonnets, all ready done up for post at the next port we touched at, and never originally destined to raise the flutter of emotion in the breast of a Spanish maiden. But Darcy, at sight of the pressed leaves, would fly to his collection of photographs and artistic silhouettes, and forget himself, if possible, in their contemplation ; and Darrille would withdraw to his cabin, plunge into dry statistics, and read up torpedo practice ; whilst Wakeham would go off and pace the bridge, and confide his opinions to the Officer of the watch. But Pyramid all the time quietly went on his way, and made no sign.

Down the long mile of road that separated the two Carrils, we passed girls at the brooks, washing, laughing, and wondering what meant this sudden invasion of ships and strangers. Bending over their linen, a lively chatter keeping time and tune to the babbling of the stream hurrying to the sea, looking up and making unintelligible remarks as we passed, they formed quite pretty and interesting groups. At the edge of the shore we watched the nets raised, and the sardines hauled in in large quantities, jumping about, and asking to be put back into their cool retreats. But they, in the hands of the Philistines, were transferred to baskets and buckets, and carried away.

A small crowd assisted at the ceremony, some of them beggars seeking alms in kind or coin. They are one of the curses as well as annoyances of Spain. In all towns they swarm round you like wasps, and are as difficult to shake off. Many are licensed by the Government, which thereby derives a considerable but questionable revenue. To induce almsgiving, they will hold out their medal, strung round their necks as a badge of their respectable trade, and almost thrust it into your face. More often than not, a mere glance at them produces a shock ; and, to get rid of an unpleasant sight, you sin against your conscience, and throw them a dole.

The day after we reached Arosa Bay, a special train to Santiago was put on for the Duke and for those Officers of the Fleet who could, or cared to, make use of the opportunity. About seventy thus visited the ancient city.

The morning was brilliant, and the blue skies of the South, and the buoyancy of the air made the heat an easier matter to bear than that of our heavier climate. The journey was in itself interesting. For some time, the blue waters of Arosa Bay were visible to the left. We passed between banks of aloes with their prickly darts shooting outwards, so often a distinguishing feature in the Spanish landscape. Olive trees grew in the plains and up the slopes, their sage-green foliage standing out in vivid contrast with all other. The whole country undulated and divided into fertile plains, valleys and hills, here barren and rocky, there clothed with soft and soothing verdure. The rich vegetation of the South gives to its vales and pastures a picturesque, and, to anyone familiar with its features, an

eastern aspect, suggestive of the voluptuousness of the Arabian Nights. All we wanted to complete the impression was the Princess Scheharazade, to tell us tales and to beguile the dusty journey with her dulcet tones and witching beauty; or Aladdin's Lamp to supply our needs, simple or capricious; or the trees around to be hung with jewels, demanding to be gathered and appropriated.

The dust referred to was, indeed, our only drawback to complete enjoyment; that, and the blacks from the engine. We all reached Santiago a combination of sweeps and millers. Our own compartment was full, but, from the *Defence*, contained only Pyramid, Oxford, and myself. Next to Pyramid, Oxford was perhaps the finest fellow in the Fleet. (He, by the way, was sent out to Egypt on our return to England, went through the war, and took part in every engagement. Recently, when out in Malta, I found that he had touched there on his way back to England, bronzed, almost blackened by the sun, beyond recognition.)

It was hard for all to reach Santiago shorn of some portion of their just due of personal appearance; but hardest for those who had a great deal of appearance to care about. Thus Pyramid, once on the platform of Santiago, endeavoured to persuade the station-master to run a special train at once back to Carril. But it was only a single line, and that official with a thousand regrets protested that it was impossible. The obstruction to the ordinary traffic would be disastrous.

The line of rail on approaching Santiago is a marvel of ingenuity, and seems almost to describe a circle, producing an effect that makes you begin to think yourself really and truly in the land of wonders and Eastern magic. You see the town on the heights on the one hand, its heavy cathedral towers standing out magnificently against a background of pure blue sky. Too weighty for the rest of the building, here nothing but the grandeur of these towers is apparent. Groves, gardens and palm trees adorn the landscape. On the other hand you perceive the great building and extensive walls of a convent rising in the midst of a depression. The next moment, surprised and bewildered you find that town and convent and different surrounding features have changed places; right has become left and left right. The train, sweeping round imperceptibly, has given rise to the transformation. Thus it happened that we found ourselves on the platform at Santiago feeling very much as if we had been turned upside down.

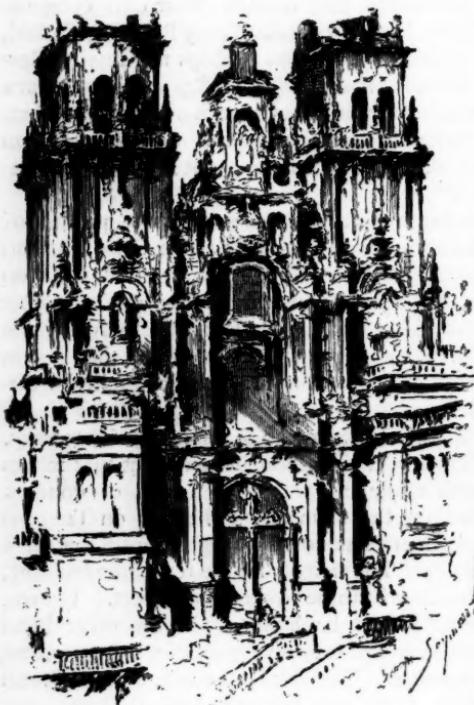
The approach to the town is striking. It lies on the slope of the hill and crowns the summit. White, cool-looking houses with their green shutters jealously closed, are surrounded by gardens and a wealth of flowers and vegetation undreamed of in sterner climes. The double geranium, especially, grows here like a weed, its hues strangely beautiful and brilliant; the palm tree raises its head, and the eucalyptus throws out its healing virtue. Tall grasses wave and rustle and

murmur, and bend their feathery fronds in graceful yielding to the wind. The train passes over a viaduct, and the plain on either hand looks quite deep and far reaching ; making the town-crowned heights seem loftier than they are. The journey has been pleasant all through, but its termination raises one to a pitch of quiet excitement and activity. We steam slowly into the station, feeling some curiosity as to what lies before us.

The authorities were on the platform to receive the Admiral and

his brother the Duke of Connaught. They drove off at once in carriages, and we immediately followed.

The town is a little distance from the station ; it is all uphill to get there ; the roads were white and dusty ; the heat touched fever point. Few of us preferred to walk. The four little horses attached to our carriage galloped along and raised a cloud that must have threatened suffocation to those coming up behind. Turning to the right, and to more level ground, we passed between a crowd of gazers on the one side, and the public gardens, well laid out, on the other. Every window was filled rows



CATHEDRAL.

deep. Innumerable bright eyes flashed forth ; but, alas, we reaped no lilies for our well-directed points of admiration. The whole town was astir and afloat at this rare and unusual visitation.

We reached the heart of the city ; our Jehu defiling through narrow thoroughfares and turning impossible corners in a miraculous manner. Now he seemed about to shoot under the arcades that line the streets on each side, and jut out beyond the houses : a catastrophe that certainly would have terminated our brilliant careers there and then ; and now, plunging recklessly down hill and turning a sharp angle, we swayed about in a way that reminded us of nothing so much as of

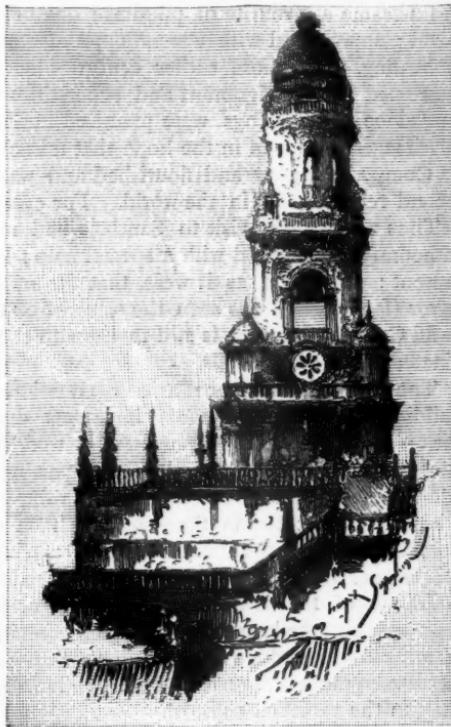
the rolling of the good *Defence*. I looked at Pyramid : he took my meaning and turned a shade paler. "Yes," he murmured ; "there are other dangers in Spain than brigands ; and not only before going to the Alhambra should a man make his will.—Oxford, have you made yours ?"

"Yes," replied Oxford in a slightly depressed tone. "The day before we reached Arosa Bay, urged by a presentiment. I have left all I possess to the Blue Ribbon Army, and have made you two joint executors. I felt that you would see the trust properly carried out, not dreaming that we should all three be running the same risk at the same time."

Certainly the streets of Santiago seemed designed for man-traps and pitfalls. They are all hilly, narrow and badly-paved ; slippery flags, with no grip for the horses' feet, and hard stones that generally find out the weak points—if you possess any—in your own. No side pavement or curbstones; nothing but dull and gloomy arcades, that still further contract the thoroughfares, and give them a heavy aspect. But they also make it look old-world and picturesque, and a distinct and vivid impression remains upon the memory.

Our conveyance finally deposited us, safe and sound, at the door of the Fonda Suiza, supposed to be the best hotel in the town. Time being necessarily short, we at once proceeded to the great attraction of the place—the cathedral, and were admitted to all parts, relics and curiosities ; the veil being raised for the Dukes, that, in some instances, is lifted only on the rarest state occasions.

Santiago de Compostella. The Pilgrim City. The Holy City. It has many names, and has had its day of grandeur—the most



BELFRY.

complete of all earth's greatnesses : that which proceeds from religious fervour and fanaticism. Santiago—or the City of St. James the Elder: Compostella—because a star is said to have indicated where the Saint's body was buried.

The city was founded as far back as A.D. 829, by Theodimir, Bishop of Tria. The body of St. James was supposed to have been discovered by a miraculous indication direct from Heaven, and a church was erected upon the site. The town dates from this period, and became a favourite of pilgrims; one of the great shrines of the world ; approached with veneration, and supposed to work wonders of healing. In those earlier centuries such errors might well be impressed upon an ignorant and superstitious world. It is not so long since these things were practised in England ; and even now pilgrimages are taken in the hope that miracles will follow. Santiago de Compostella grew and flourished and waxed great, becoming the second religious city in the world. For everything yielded to Rome.

Thus viewed, our visit to Santiago had marked interest, and the cathedral was endowed with a special halo ; linking together past and present ; combining, as it were, that far off age of superstition and terror (for Santiago has seen the tortures of the Inquisition, and the awful Council Chamber is still there) with the enlightened days of the nineteenth century.

The cathedral at once arrests attention as being no ordinary building. That which most impresses one is that which is first seen—the exterior. It possesses a wonderfully old-world appearance ; a look of such antiquity that you might imagine it about to fall to pieces ; a perfect and colossal ruin, needing but the touch of a hand to lay it low in the dust. I have never seen any building bear, apparently, such traces of the destroying hand of Time. And this aspect is not confined to the cathedral alone. Other large buildings of the town, such as the University and the Hospital, look equally woe-begone, grey and decrepit. To gaze upon them is sufficient to reduce the mind to melancholy. It is gazing at departed grandeur, yet at something infinitely more beautiful now than in the vanished days.

The whole town, indeed, possesses this grave and melancholy appearance, giving one a death-in-life kind of sensation, inexpressibly dismal, and making a long sojourn there impossible. This mournful aspect is said to be due less to the effects of time than to the action of the atmosphere. It is peculiarly humid; and the humidity has laid its mark upon all, and tinged all with the mournful hue of death. Santiago is one of those places that affect the mind powerfully at a first visit ; and it is well to make the visit a short one.

The first feeling with regard to the interior of the cathedral—and I am not sure that it is not the last—is one of disappointment. To begin with, it is steeped in that dim religious gloom so essentially out of place in a building of this description. Ponderous and massive,

there is not sufficient light to remove from the mind a feeling of undue heaviness and weight. It is in the form of a Latin cross, but as only a small portion of the building, apparently, could be seen at once, it was difficult to gain any idea of its general effect. Between the massive pillars, the heavy though splendid screens, the immense curtains, the interior seemed spoilt and overcrowded by its own adornments.

The gloom alluded to is said to be designed in order that the illuminations at the High[®]Altar (composed of massive silver : a really gorgeous and splendid work) may shine forth more conspicuously at their great festivals. At such times the effect upon the mind of the worshipper is no doubt thrilling, the sight as imposing as sight can well be ; whilst the figure of St. James, magnificent in burnished gold and flashing jewelry and elaborate surroundings, stands out in a blaze of ornamentation. But it seems an error to sacrifice light, so much needed, to an occasional and passing result. We saw no illumination, no blaze of glory ; only the darkness : and occasionally we stumbled.

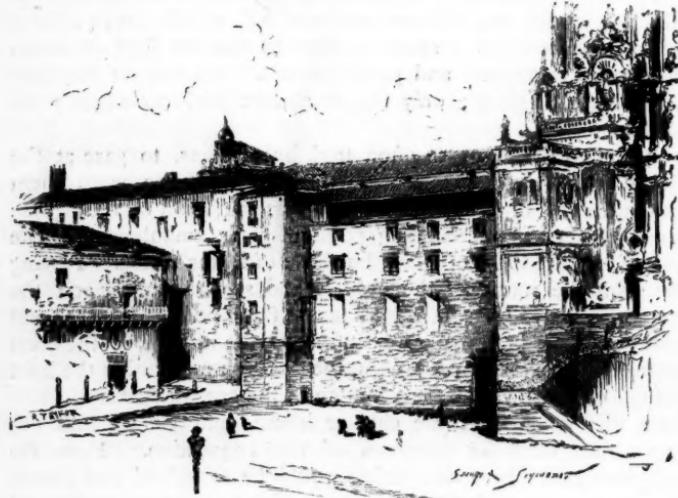
We mounted the steps, so often trod by pilgrims, to gaze at the wonderful image and shrine. A countless host has worn them smooth and small in their eagerness to kiss the hood of the figure : the great object and culminating point of their ambulations. The figure itself is said to be of stone, but little of it was visible. Passing on, we went the round of the chapels and saw the relics and the shrines, the massive plate and the figures of the numerous saints and patrons. But no part was so beautiful as the interior of the west entrance, consisting of three arches, the design representing the Last Judgment, executed by Maestro Matteo in the twelfth century.

From this we entered the chapter house, and passed into the chamber once used for purposes of the Inquisition. Here the council would sit ; here the victims would be examined and placed on the preliminary rack for the purpose of bending them to the will of their tormentors. And those who know anything of the Spanish disposition, which still rejoices in the sight of animal suffering and the chancing of human life, can realise something of the lengths to which the Inquisition carried its cruelties.

The walls of the room were padded and massive, the windows deep. No sound of debate, or confession, or the cries of the tortured could escape. Later on it was used as a royal bedchamber, and is still hung with the tapestry that then decorated the walls. All trace of its previous office has disappeared ; but there is an atmosphere that must cling to it for ever. Imagination sees the council at its work, stern, cruel and relentless in character and mission. The rack occupies the middle of the chamber ; its prey, pale, yet firm before the judges. He refuses their bidding, and is placed on the dread instrument. You hear the creaking of the machinery as it is slowly set in motion ; one turn and yet another, until the agony is complete.

The sighs of the victim lurk in the corners of the room ; groans and shrieks escape upwards to Heaven and cry aloud for vengeance ; but there is no pity in the hearts of those torturers, no response beyond a savage pleasure and purpose betrayed by the kindling glance, the parting of cruel lips, the gleam of white teeth. And some, with whom the spirit, indeed, was willing but the flesh was weak, yielded ; and some suffered to the bitter end.

Yes, the place was haunted ; doubly haunted. A thousand pale ghosts were there ; the room was full of them. Through every pane of glass in the mulioned windows there peered the phantom eyes of a martyr. Centuries have passed since these things were done, yet their horrors are as distinct as if but of yesterday ; as present as they



IN THE SQUARE.

will be on that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be brought to light.

No one lingered very long in this tapestry room. Re-entering the cathedral, the great west gates, magnificent in size, age, workmanship, and in their triple character, were thrown open, and we all passed out to the steps fronting the great square.

Standing at the head of the long, broad flight, you beheld a grand and unusual scene. Overshadowing us, as it were, was the building we had just left, its impression upon the mind yet remaining. At that moment only one thing seemed wanting to complete the charm. The organ that, on each side the chancel, in its double frame, crowned so well the splendid old stalls and the Archbishop's throne, should have pealed forth the "swelling anthem." A flood of harmony streaming down the aisles, and reverberating amongst the arches, and

filling all the outside air, would have thrilled the listeners with a more wholesome rapture than ever was felt by pilgrim on kissing the hood of St. James. But, throughout our visit, the silent organ was an oversight and a disappointment.

One other thing might have been done. The famous bells of Santiago should have rung and rocked from the cathedral towers, and sent forth such a peal as the inhabitants had never before heard. Seldom is the city honoured with the presence of Princes of the House of England, and all the sounds of rejoicing that turn an ordinary day into a festival should have commemorated this visit.



COLLEGE.

Probably the authorities of Santiago think less of their organ and their chimes than does anyone else; and if they happen to dislike music, it might not even occur to them to sound the loud timbrel or strike the living lyre. Perhaps, too, the organist was absent, and the ringers were sleeping. Probably, also, few felt the oppressive silence of the belfry and the magic reeds, save a small number, whose heart, wrapped in music, had long been taken captive by St. Cecilia.

The remaining three sides of the square were composed of three large buildings. Before us, the seminary for the education of young priests; to the left, the college of St. Jerome; to the right, the hospital founded, in 1504, by Ferdinand and Isabella, for the use of pilgrims. One can imagine the motley group these now ancient walls frequently enclosed.

The front of the hospital is yet more hoary-looking than the cathedral: a delicious bit of antiquity that might have existed in the days of St. James himself. Gray and green, black and crumbling; intact, yet looking ruinous. As I have said, this effect is due less to age than atmosphere. It is in part a delusion, but a delusion that is all gain to the visitor.

We crossed the square, a long procession, and entered the hospital. For a moment, owing to a wrong impression, I thought we were visiting the college, and prepared for a feast of reason and a flow of soul.

Through an open court into a chapel; richly ornamented, but out of harmony with the severe simplicity one expects from a body of grave University men. Then up a wide staircase, plain and unadorned. Here, at any rate, was austerity enough. Now, thought I, for the intellectual banquet: for grand rooms lined with ancient and interesting tomes: for learned men who will explain all that is mystery and indicate all that is marvel: for illuminated MSS. and rare missals worth almost the ransom of a St. Iago. Now for a priceless half hour spent amid the buried centuries and giant minds of the past. This shall be a time well devoted, long remembered.

And then I awoke to realities: a greater shock, perhaps, for being so unprepared. Details of the hospital ward are unnecessary; but it was many days before a painful impression could be dismissed from the mind and the imagination. A few moments sufficed for the visit. There should be no further chance of shocks, surprises, or disappointments; no more inspections. We fell away from the group, which passed through the doors of the seminary and disappeared.

Pyramid, Oxford and I were now left standing in the middle of the square. It was being repaired, and great blocks of stone, lying about, added no little to its general aspect of ruin and desolation. For a moment, giving ourselves up to our surroundings, we were lost in a magnificent contemplation. To the right of the cathedral was the fine front of the chapter-house; and beyond, the windows of the Room of the Inquisition—as we will here call it. To the left, the archbishop's palace, ancient looking as the church itself, formed the corner of the square.

But passing time and decaying buildings reminded one also of perishing human nature, which needs constant replenishment if the lamp is to be kept burning. So, insensibly, we wended our way past the palace, up the narrow, hilly street, between the heavy arcades that veiled the shops they in no way adorned. Our destination was the Fonda Suiza, and we should probably have found it difficult to thread the intricate mazes leading to the desired haven, but for a gentleman of Santiago; a good Samaritan; an Englishman actually, but a Spaniard for all practical purposes. Without his escort, for the remaining hours of our stay we had been cast adrift.

Aided by our guide, philosopher and friend, we soon found our-

selves within the walls of the Fonda Suiza. To have our modest wants in any degree attended to was another matter. It is often difficult to be served in an hotel in Spain; but to-day the landlord and waiters of the inn were beside themselves.

Table d'hôte was nearly over in the long dining-room; and some of the Officers of the Fleet, less on buildings than on pleasure bent, were doing justice to an excellent repast. For ourselves, we went into a small side-room, and there, by dint of occasionally shaking up the waiters, now bribing the bustling little host with entreaties, and now threatening to bombard him with the Fleet, we finally found ourselves—not exactly in clover, but, like Ruth, gleaning; though not in cornfields. Even our gleanings would have been meagre enough—a sort of Barmecide's feast—but for our Mentor, who came down upon them with the lightning shafts of their own language, and gave them no peace until they would listen to reason.

Altogether it was a little insight into Spanish life, manners and character, amusing and instructive. I should like some day again to pay just such a flying visit, under similar circumstances to Santiago, the cathedral, and the Fonda Suiza. But how often in life do our pleasant days and experiences repeat themselves?

Tiffin over, and the landlord's just claims discharged, we had still some time to spare, and sallied forth. As usual, the door was thronged with beggars, and getting clear of these, we found ourselves in the quiet streets of Santiago. There was not much to be seen here. The shops, small and indifferent, were smothered by the arcades. We entered a typical one out of curiosity: a fan dépôt: and gazed at its marvels of art and cheapness. Again we wanted the Princess Scheharazade's help in this delicate matter, but, alas, we had no slave of the lamp to produce her at our bidding.

Pyramid selected one, gorgeous in gold and black, representing a harem of ladies with languishing eyes; chose it simply because one amongst these "lights" was the facsimile of the damsel who, at Arosa Bay (a more romantic name than Carril, and better suited to our theme) had thrown him the lily: emblem, we will devoutly hope, of the lady's heart and intentions. Oxford and I, sighing in vain for lilies, had no such inducement for selection, and took quiet subjects, where little shepherdesses led pet lambs by a pink leash, and elderly dévotes knelt at a confessional, and yellow buttercups bloomed on amber satin.

We were much applauded for our taste on getting back to the *Defence*: for the officers were nearly all of simple habits and cultivated a rigid tone of morality and decorum. And when the pet lambs and shepherdesses, just for fun, were put up at a mock auction, they reached a figure that would have bought a dozen fans in Santiago. Pyramid's, on the other hand, was voted voluptuous, and calculated to endanger the high standard of our minds. (I knew his motive for buying it, which put quite a different colouring on the affair, but

I could not betray his confidence.) A serious consultation ensued as to whether he should not be voted the Black Sheep of the ward-room ; but this being his first offence (in the way of fans), the matter was condoned on condition that the article should not again be brought forward. The committee then broke up, and, with the help of the windsail, the atmosphere of the ward-room was changed.

That afternoon in Santiago, we spent some time, as well as money, in the fan-shop—as may be supposed : then crossed over to the club. Here we inspected the ball-room, where Spanish beauties flash their bright glances and flirt their own fans at susceptible Dons, and behave in an altogether light and frivolous fashion, after the manner of human nature : just as if Santiago de Compostella were an ordinary town : instead of being surrounded by an atmosphere steeped in the odour of sanctity, with streets pilgrim-worn and Pope-blessed, and protected by the lofty image of St. James the Elder.

There was little to see beyond : and we had no time left for exploring, and less desire. So, in the sober hours of the afternoon, we turned towards the station, through the blooming Public Gardens that crowned the hill, gorgeous and gay with flowers ; down the white dusty road, now comparatively deserted ; finally finding ourselves on the platform. The train waited. Ere long we were steaming over the viaduct ; admiring the position of the town ; again watching the transformation ; noting the fine effect of the cathedral towers that stood out against a sky so blue, so ethereal, so transparent. Then, passing on, we lost sight of all that recalled Santiago.

Once more bound for Carril. Through the undulating scenery, with its olive groves and palm trees and long stretches of aloes. But the train this evening was in a slow and stately mood, and we three were in a hurry ; Pyramid especially, who was under an engagement to dine that night with Captain Jago, and whose hour was approaching. Therefore, when the train stopped within two hundred yards of the station : and so much nearer the pier where the steam pinnace of the *Defence* was in waiting : we three got out, crossed the lines, and reached our boat almost before the train had slowly puffed into Carril.

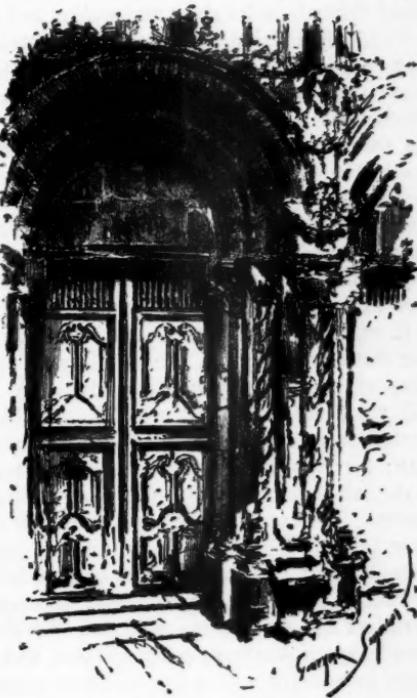
The full glare of day had left earth and sky ; the sun was declining ; a cool breeze—the usual evening experience—had sprung up ; the surrounding calm and quiet were conspicuous after our late hours in the Holy City. Santiago de Compostella, perhaps, for our especial benefit, had overspread these waters with the sanctity of its religious atmosphere. The eight vessels of the Fleet, riding at anchor in the landlocked waters of Arosa Bay, looked dignified, and worthy of England. And our credit was saved by our manœuvre. As we stepped on board, the first bugle sounded, and instead of being half-an-hour behind time, we had fifteen minutes to spare for shifting into war paint.

During the cruise each vessel has to be inspected once by the

Admiral : and Thursday morning had been appointed for the *Defence* —the first inspection since leaving England. As the Admiral's barge was seen to leave the Flag-ship, the blue jackets were ordered aloft to man the yards, and on his coming over the gangway, he was received by a guard of marines and all the officers. After a minute inspection of the crew and ship, the Admiral ordered the ship to be cleared for action, which was done with a silence and rapidity that to an outsider seems akin to magic. After a short exercise with the heavy guns, the inspection ended, the Admiral leaving with the usual salute, and with that show of courtesy and kindness on his part for which all the members of our Royal Family are so remarkable.

That afternoon, our last in Arosa Bay, we again landed. The full complement of fruit-women gazed at us "with a mute affection," ready to offer their wares in willing sacrifice. But we had grown accustomed to this kind of adoration, and passed it by unheeding. The Fleur-de-lys was, alas, invisible. Probably the savage parent or duenna who had discovered Tuesday's rash proceeding had shut her up in a tower until the safe departure of the Fleet. The streets, in consequence, looked more woe-begone and dilapidated than ever.

So, four of us wandered up a hill to the right, until we came to a large, ancient building. The great doorway was open, and through a deep arch we perceived a garden beyond. The glimpse was too alluring to withstand, and, entering, we found ourselves in a small Paradise. Immense flower beds abounded, full of loveliest blooms, the double geranium brilliant above all. Avenues of over-arching trees shut out the blaze of the sun. The house looked tenantless, the rooms deserted, the garden wild and abandoned. But what a lovely wilderness, and what a glorious abandonment ! We sauntered



WEST GATES.

under the spreading trees, reposed in the shade, revelled in the flowers.

At the extremity of the garden we suddenly faced the blue waters of the bay. The land stretched round in a circle of wavy hills and undulations. The ships of war lay at anchor in this fair setting, the *Defence* easily distinguished by her light water line, and as having the prettiest stern of the whole Squadron. The air was light and ethereal : the sky a blue we dream of in England, but never see. Existence was a pleasure, in such a spot almost a rapture. One might linger here for days and weeks, and never count the hours.

Suddenly a vision of fair girls completed the picture. Advancing, they caught sight of us, started, stood still for a moment like frightened deer ; then, suddenly seeing Pyramid, hurried forward. None of the daughters of Eve could ever resist Pyramid. These belonged to the garden and the house, and made us welcome. Happily they spoke French, and we were able to dispense with signs. They picked us large bouquets of choicest flowers, and, later, on bidding them farewell, dismissed us laden with marks of their goodwill and charmed with the Spanish temperament, so simple and so confiding Hospitality with the Spanish is almost an article of religion, and here we had found it in its most attractive form.

It was our last visit on shore ; our last reminiscence of Arosa Bay ; one that dwelt long in the mind, and formed the topic of much pleasant and dreamy conversation. We had found a little Eden ; half wild, half cultivated, wholly charming. A bower of roses that wanted only the nightingale's song to make it perfect. Yet scarcely that ; for rippling laughter and dulcet notes came from the throats of the fair human nightingales that suddenly had appeared in the groves. We are still memory-haunted by the scent of the flowers and their brilliant hues, the murmuring of the trees that cast us their grateful shade ; haunted by soft breezes laden with silvery voices, and sparkling eyes that flashed, and pleasant words that greeted the intruders and made them welcome. So that, on leaving the garden, I found myself the only sober-minded and responsible member of a party intoxicated with a fine frenzy of extravagant delight.

It was in Arosa Bay that Captain Jago amused himself and others at my expense. And as "I hold it truth with him who sings," that an historian should state the whole of his case even to his own cost, I give the brief record. I had been fitted up on board with a swinging cot, as being more comfortable than a berth; whether it is so or not is a matter of opinion ; mine is in favour of the latter. "If you have a fixed berth," said Captain Jago to me one day, "the rolls remain in your head ; but if you have a cot, they remain in the cot." I never found it so. Unaccustomed to this moveable arrangement, which is really never still for a moment, my first night on board was an experience.

When the time for retiring arrived, I endeavoured to get into my

cot with the help of a chair ; but the more I tried, the more the oscillating thing went from me. In vain I made desperate plunges. The ship was not perfectly steady, and now the cot slipped away with a lurch, and now the chair went sliding backwards. It was a very disagreeable sensation. At last, in some miraculous manner, I found myself safely packed, and then discovered that the cot, not having been evenly slung, was lopsided. This would have been enough to upset one even on shore. When at length I slept, I was haunted by dreams of shipwrecks, battles, and a thousand other ills. In the midst of a tremendous scene of fire and carnage, I started up, and the crooked cot pitched me out head first with an alarming crash. How I got in again, whether whole or in pieces, I never knew. But the Captain was highly amused at what had gone nigh to prove my end. So closely allied in this life are tragedy and comedy.

One night Captain Jago was dining with the Admiral on board the Flag Ship. In the course of conversation with the Duke of Connaught, he was cruel enough to mention the ill fate that had befallen me a few days ago. Anything ludicrous in the misfortunes of our friends makes us laugh in spite of ourselves.

"How came he to do that?" asked the Duke of Connaught.

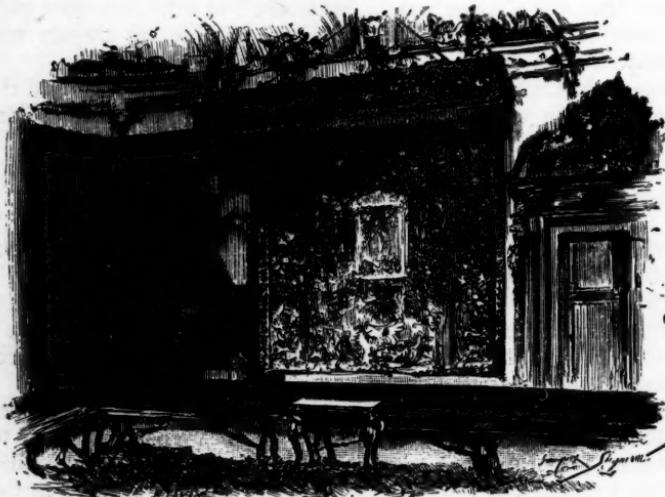
"I really hardly know," replied Captain Jago ; "but, at the time, I believe he was saying his prayers."

There was now much merriment at my cost. But the next day, going on board the Flag-ship to record my name in the Admiral's Visitors' Book, I was careful to leave behind me a true and correct version of this "perverted incident."

That same afternoon, when we were revelling in the shady groves of that Arosa Paradise, all our laughter had nearly been changed to mourning. The Admiral, who had gone some miles up the country to fish, fell into the weir. For nearly half an hour he was in the water, and sank and rose four times. He had given up hope, and perhaps no one else in the whole Fleet would have had any chance of life : but few are so much at home in the water as His Royal Highness. Finally, as we know, he was saved. It did not do to think of what might have been. A cruise cut short. A return to England almost before we had left her shores : a sad and solemn return indeed. A sort of Dead March across the waters of the ocean ; a hushed and mournful squadron ; flags half-mast high. A good Providence ruled it otherwise, and great was the rejoicing.

The *Defence* and *Valiant* had not fired their quarter's allowance of ammunition on joining the squadron, and were in consequence ordered to sea at 6.0 a.m., the day of sailing from Arosa, with instructions to carry out their Target-practice and rejoin the Squadron in the evening. In full sunshine the two vessels steamed away between the undulating hills and low-lying shores. Once out on the broad sea, we commenced firing. As ill-luck had it, I was more

than half dead that day with headache. The previous night, the M.B. had had a select "Small and Early" in his cabin, for purposes of Discussion. The warmth of the debate, carried on to the last moment permitted by the regulations, had utterly banished sleep. If the amiable M.B. had a fault, it was his love of argument : and the deeper the subject, the longer would he delight in keeping the ball rolling. That night the subject had not been deep at all. In opening the debate, he had stated it in the following terms : "How far the growing movement of the Salvation Army was likely to influence the morals of the next generation." Not at all an abstruse proposition, but concerning which everyone had profound and distinct convictions, and an immense deal to say.



ROOM OF THE INQUISITION.

The next morning, every time a gun was fired and shook the vessel to its centre, I fancied, in a half delirium, that my head was the big drum with which the Salvation Army delights to head its processions, and that it was being beaten with a determination which might be Christian but was certainly muscular. The firing continued for some hours, until we had expended our quarter's ammunition, and finished up with a torpedo. One moment, the target was in the midst of the waters ; the next, it had disappeared in a shower of spray. Quietness brought relief, and though feeling very much like the shattered target, I recovered sufficiently, and just in time, to keep my dinner engagement with one of the kindest, most courteous, and most hospitable men that ever commanded a man of war.

By that time we had rejoined the Squadron and were on our way to Gibraltar, yet shorn of one of our vessels. The *Penelope* had

proceeded under orders to the East. Henceforth our number was represented by the mystic numeral. In an unbroken line of four on one side, and an incomplete one of three on the other, we steered for the blue waters of the Mediterranean. Next month, dear reader, I hope we may cruise through the Straits together.



A LITTLE ROOM.

THE room was very small and bare :
Its low and empty walls were brown ;
No magic touch of art was there
To bring the country to the town :
And all the beauty it could show,
Were six sweet myrtles in a row !

Now, while I stir not from my chair,
My heart to that poor room will steal ;
A sense of summer time is there,
A myrtle-scented breath I feel :
I hear again the passing cry,
“Roses a-blowing ! Who will buy ?”

What made that low room all so dear ?
A vanished face, a tender tone,
Whose music I shall never hear
While life's long dusk I spend alone.
Our love, I know, is still the same,
But who can guess its new-made frame ?

And so, when dreaming on my seat,
My soul seeks New Jerusalem town,
It always seems her weary feet
Regain that chamber bare and brown :
And God's own glory seems to glow
On myrtles, standing in a row !

I know quite well that cannot be :
(Yet sometimes parables are true !)
But it must stand for Heaven to me :
A haven in God's boundless blue ;
Where Love finds anchorage, while wide
God's sea of love rolls every side !

I. F. M.

MY SATURDAYS.

HOW SHE ATONED.

I.

I WAS in St. George's Chapel at Windsor one week-day afternoon. I had not been at service there before, and I did not know how to obtain a seat at the side, under the Knights' stalls ; so I modestly sat me down on one of the benches in the aisle. The side seats were occupied by a sprinkling of ladies, evidently habituées ; and a few gentlemen sat in the stalls above.

As I ran a glance along the rows, I was suddenly caught and stopped by a pair of eyes. Eyes, and no more : the high bench prevented my seeing the face below ; the eyes themselves would let me see nothing above. Such eyes ! large, dark enough to seem black —but with a depth in them which black eyes never have, underlined with purple shades, and bordered with the light, sad tracings that tell tales. Not beautiful eyes, at all, having no charm of shape or setting ; but weary, melancholy, yearning eyes. Eyes to beset your thoughts by day, and haunt your dreams by night. Eyes that had wept comfortlessly over some great sorrow ; eyes that ached to pierce some unfathomable mystery. They met my own, but I saw that they took no note of me. I was not what they sought, and they cared for nothing else. "What *have* they seen ?" I wondered, with a shiver ; "and oh ! what are they waiting to see ?"

Presently the service began, and we all stood up. Then I saw that the eyes belonged to a woman still young, though not a girl. There was nothing beautiful or striking about the rest of her face, but she was evidently a lady ; and indeed I soon perceived that she was with some acquaintances of mine who lived in the neighbourhood. I tried hard not to stare at her, and to keep both my own eyes and my attention fixed on my book ; but hers were too much for me, and I found myself constantly looking at her again, in a fascinated sort of way. I was glad when the service ended, and then, of course, the first thing I did was to join her companions in the court outside, and be introduced to her. It was very ridiculous—a woman of my age to be caught by a pair of dark eyes, like a boy of eighteen ; but I could not help it. It was not that I thought her particularly attractive, for I did not ; but she was a mystery, and I must know something of her.

In time I came to know something about her : I change the preposition, for her real self—whatever it was—only looked out veiled through those wonderful eyes, and I was as far from solving the mystery as I had been the first day I saw her. Her name was Lena Graham, and she had no near relations living. She had a small

income, enough to save her from the necessity of earning her bread : visited her uncles, aunts, and cousins, whenever she was asked, which was reasonably often ; and in a general way, seemed to be nothing particular, and to do nothing particular.

"I have her down here whenever I can," her aunt, Mrs. Neville, explained to me that day at Windsor, when I had gone home with them to afternoon tea ; "because it really is a lonely life for her. But it is a good deal of a *gêne*, for she isn't lively or amusing at all, and the girls don't care for her. And then she has no pursuits, except this dreadful spiritualism, which makes me so nervous."

"You don't have séances ?"

"Oh, no. I wouldn't have such a thing in the house on any account; I think it is quite wicked ; and Lena knows that I disapprove, and, to do her justice, she has never talked to the girls about it, or tried to set it going at all. But I know she visits horrid places in London where they have dark séances, and all sorts of things ; and I'm always afraid that she will set us all distracted."

"It is a pity she hasn't something better to occupy her mind."

"So I always say. Now, the Vicar wanted my girls to take a district here ; he even went so far as to ask Marian to teach in a night school ; and of course I could not allow that. They would be sure to catch fevers in those dirty houses, and altogether, it wouldn't do. I tell them their home duties are enough for them. But Lena, now, might quite give herself up to charity, and it would be so nice for her."

"Everybody is not inclined to self-devotion, though, even when they have nothing better to do with themselves. Does not Miss Graham care for music or reading ?"

"That's another provoking thing. Lena has a lovely voice; she used to give hours to music at one time ; but no one ever hears her now, except sometimes a little at Church. She gave it all up, and went in for study. She wanted to take a degree, I think, or something of the sort. Very absurd, I always told her. The mere idea of a girl being a Bachelor, you know, is so ridiculous. When they can't even find a sensible name for the thing, it must be against nature. But I really wish now I had encouraged her, for after a time she gave all that up, too ; and at any rate it was better than moping and spirit-rapping."

"Do you know how she came to take up spiritualism ?"

"Well, I fancy it had something to do with her little brother's death. He was her step-brother, a great many years younger. She was quite grown-up when it happened ; they were living together at some boarding-house in London. She took it greatly to heart ; I think it was then that she gave up her books, and took to all these fancies. I know we were surprised to see how she felt it ; we never thought she cared much about little Joso when he was alive."

I thought that I had got the clue to Miss Graham's melancholy, then, though it seemed strange that one such sorrow should lay waste a life ; but no further light was thrown upon her history, though I

saw her a good many times that summer. It turned out that she had been at school with Charlotte Stamwood, and that she was a connection of Mrs. Villiers, and had seen a good deal of Imogen at her house. So I persuaded Mrs. Neville to make an expedition, and bring her over to one of my Saturday afternoon teas, to renew her old acquaintances.

Charlotte came specially to meet her, and the result was that when she had finished her visit at Windsor, she came for a time to Tamston Rectory. Imogen was up and down, often spending a couple of days with me (of which Archie got more benefit than I did), and when she was at liberty, Miss Graham came in to see her, or they took walks together. In one way or another, I managed to see a great deal of her, but knew her very little better. We had plenty of interesting talk, for she was intelligent and well-informed; but she never responded to that half-speculative, half-personal talk about feelings and qualities and characteristics, through which women so easily drift into self-revelation. She might have warmed apropos of spiritualism, but I was afraid of the subject, and always avoided it, until that rainy Saturday, when Captain Perth was the object of a mahogany vengeance.* I was not at all pleased with the part she had taken in the affair; but I had asked her in the morning to stay to dine and spend the evening, and though I had been annoyed and frightened, and generally upset, I could not send her away.

The days were growing shorter, and we had dinner late, to suit Archie, so that there was a twilight half-hour before that event. The lovers had disappeared, and when I came into the drawing-room I found Lena Graham in sole possession of it. She was walking up and down with her hands behind her, her great black eyes looking larger and blacker than ever in the dusk. She turned to me quickly as I came in.

"I am so glad you have come," she said, eagerly. "I want you to tell me all about them."

"About whom?"

"Captain Perth, of course, and his wife. I know he was cruel to her. Did he beat her?"

"No; certainly not."

"Did he starve her? did he neglect her? did he leave her to shiver with cold, and pine, and die?" she went on, absolutely glaring into my face.

"Not at all," I answered. "What ideas have you taken up about these people? They were my neighbours, and Captain Perth was my guest to-day. I don't want to gossip about his affairs, and I am very sorry that anything unpleasant has happened to him in my house."

"I know there was something wrong," she persisted, "though you don't want to tell me. How did Mrs. Perth die?"

* See "Poor Mrs. Perth," ARGOSY, December, 1882.

"Very suddenly, from heart disease."

"Heart disease?" she said, contemptuously. "He killed her. I knew it. He is a murderer; but he will be punished. His punishment begins to-day, and I have helped to begin it. I am glad."

"You know nothing about it," I answered, growing angry. "Captain and Mrs. Perth were always on very good terms; and if they were not, what business is it of yours?"

"On good terms?" she repeated again, with a harsh laugh. "That means that she bore it, and said nothing about it. You needn't try to humbug me; the spirits tell the truth. What business is it of mine? Well, none, perhaps; but it's my pleasure. I like to see cruel people punished; and he was cruel. I am punished; why shouldn't he be?"

"You?"

"Oh, yes, I. Don't I look like it? Don't I look like a woman who is cursed, and haunted, and driven mad and desperate, till her only pleasure is to see the same justice done on others who have been as bad? Don't I?"

She did look so awfully like it as she clutched my arm and shook it, her eyes widening and widening, with green gleams on them like a wild creature's, that I thought for a moment she was going mad. I sought about for something to say to calm her.

"Sometimes people are punished in this life for their good, that they may escape worse hereafter," I ventured, not feeling very sure of my ground.

"Do you think so, Mrs. Singleton? oh, do you think so? Do you think one can have one's torment in this life, and not in the next?"

"My dear," I said, "these are awful questions. I can't answer them. You had better talk to a clergyman if you have anything on your mind."

"I can't. I can't talk to anybody. I never said a word before. I don't know how I came to say anything now. I ought to hold my tongue."

"No," I said, boldly. "You have held your tongue long enough, and it is killing you. Tell me all about it. If I can't help you, perhaps I can comfort you."

"Comfort me, you good creature! *You* comfort me! And you want me to tell you! What would you say if I did tell you? What would you say if you heard that I was a murderer?"

"I should say that I didn't believe it."

"But it is true. Oh, it is true! And yet I never meant it—I never meant it!"

She dropped in a heap on the ground, clutching the arm of a chair in her hands, and burying her face in her arms. Her breath came in long-drawn gasps, that were almost groans. I knelt on the floor beside her, and laid my hand on her shoulder. She shivered away from it.

"Tell me," I said.

"It was Joso—my little brother Joso. We were alone in the world : he had no father or mother, nobody but me. He was fond of me : he used to put his arms round my neck and I would sing to him. He liked to hear me sing. You asked me to sing once : now you know why I can't." She stopped for a minute, then went on with breaks and fitful pauses. I dared not interrupt or question her.

"Then I took to studying for a degree. I thought of nothing else. There was a maid to look after Joso ; I had no time to attend to him. He got thin and sick ; I did not notice it at first ; then I got a doctor for him, and paid for his physic. I couldn't see that he had it, you know ; I was too busy. It takes a lot of time to be a Bachelor." She laughed a horrid little laugh.

"I heard all about it afterwards from the people of the house. They never told me when I might have saved him. The maid neglected him—as I did. She went out for hours, or sat down in the kitchen, gossiping, and he was left alone. He used to stand at the window for half the day, with his face against the glass—so lonely. She didn't give him his medicine, or see to his food. Neither did I ; I was too busy. Sometimes, of course, I saw him ; I remember he asked me to sing to him, and I wouldn't. I was tired, or didn't want to be bothered. Then he got a cough. It was a bitter winter, and the woman used to stay away, and let the fire out ; and he was there, by himself, in the cold. One evening I went up to his room. It was all dark ; there was no fire or light ; and he was sitting in a corner, crying quietly to himself. I took him up ; he was half-frozen. Then he began to cough dreadfully, and when I took him down into my own warm room, I saw how thin and wretched he was. I did everything I could for him then, when it was too late. He died in about a fortnight. He had starved, and pined, and frozen to death upstairs, while I sat below with my fire and my books, and never thought of him. He was my charge, my brother ; he had nobody but me ; and I let him die."

I could not speak.

"When he was gone, I was nearly mad," she went on. "I wanted to speak to him, to tell him that I loved him, that I never meant it, that I would give my life to have him back. I thought perhaps he would forgive me : he was such a loving little fellow, not hard and selfish, like me. I heard that one could speak to the spirits and get answers, and I tried. I could do it ; they would answer me ; but Joso never would. Once or twice, other mediums gave me messages that they said were from him, but I knew they were not true. He would not speak to me. I have tried, and tried, and waited, and called for him ; but he would not come ; he would not answer. Earth is empty, and Heaven is dumb. I am alone, like Cain. Why not ? I murdered my brother, as he did."

"No," I said; "you did not. There cannot be murder without hate. You loved your little brother?"

"I did—I did, indeed," she moaned.

"You love him still?"

"Yes."

"If you could have him back, you would do quite differently?"

"I would give up everything for him."

"Then you repent; and where there is repentance there is forgiveness. You have done Joso no real harm. He is happier now than you could ever have made him, if you had done your very best. When you see him again, you will know that he has forgiven you—that he never knew there was anything to forgive. He is not allowed to speak to you in these ways of your own choosing; but never doubt that he loves you. Some day he will tell you so. And perhaps, even on earth, you may be allowed some way of atoning."

"Oh, how do you think?" she cried, starting up with an eager hope.

"I do not know," I answered. "You must wait and see. But I think there will be a way."

"If there is, I will do it, if it costs my life. Oh, you give me hope. I have known nothing but despair for so long."

"You must not despair any more," I said, putting my arm round her, and kissing her. She gave me one long, passionate kiss, and then fled from the room.

Nobody was surprised that, after the fatigue of a séance, Miss Graham had too bad a headache to keep her engagement to dinner.

II.

We had now come to the end of August, and as often happens in that month, were having an uncomfortable time of wet and chilly weather, which would not have been out of place in October. Garden parties were impossible; my last had been broken up by rain, which drove everyone in-doors, and I determined to issue no more general invitations. But I had announced that I would be at home on all the Saturday afternoons in August; and accordingly, though the last Saturday in that month was cold, showery, and unpleasant, my drawing-room was well filled. I had lit one of the unseasonable fires which Charlotte Stamwood loved—merely a bright crackle of wood and cannel coal; thrown open my little greenhouse door, and moved the plants so as to make room for a couple of chairs, obtained as much space as possible in the drawing-room, arranged tea in the hall—so as to be brought in easily, provided some music, and generally made the best that I could of the circumstances.

Lena Graham was staying with me. After the scene of last Saturday, I could not let her drift away, and she seemed to cling to me, and eagerly accepted my invitation. She took up her quarters

with me on the Friday, and was soon quite at home, and very helpful in all my arrangements.

People collected—as I said—in considerable force, chatted, listened, drank tea, stayed as long as they felt inclined, and went away when they chose. About five o'clock, or a little after, I remember there was a drenching shower of rain, which drove against the glass, and blurred it with sudden streams, and made everything outside look dreary.

"Mrs. Singleton," said Charlotte, spreading out her hands luxuriously to feel the blaze, "do you remember the little fire you had that cold day in May when we first talked about your Saturdays?"

"I remember," I said; "you never would have had courage to broach the idea but for its friendly countenance."

"It convinced me that you possessed the gifts of a hostess," she returned; "and I appeal to the company, whether the result has not justified my predictions. Here we are at the last of Mrs. Singleton's Saturdays—for this year, and have they not been a great success?"

Of course there was an acquiescent chorus of "Perfect," "Delightful, I'm sure," "Quite a new feature in Tamston society," &c. &c., which I interrupted.

"Charlotte, your capacity for 'spreading the butter thick' is such that if you inflict another morsel upon me, I will betray you at the next wedding, and you shall propose the health of the bride and bridegroom. You would be using your vocal powers to much better purpose by singing to us."

"My dear Mrs. Singleton, my feelings would be too much for me: I should break down. What! I, who watched over the cradle of your Saturdays, shall I sing beside their bier? No, seek some lighter heart."

"We have never had the pleasure of hearing Miss Graham," suggested Mrs. Minton, "and I know that she sings *beautifully*."

"You are mistaken, Mrs. Minton," answered Lena quietly; "I do not sing at all."

"Oh, come now, you are too modest; I have heard people quite rave about your voice—in Church, you know. You *might* let us hear it somewhere else, if you are not under a vow."

"I am not under any vow, but I do not practise any songs, and I do not wish to sing."

"You had better not press her, Mrs. Minton," I put in, anxious to save her from being teased; "it would be dangerous, for I should be offended now if she were to sing for anyone else after having refused me."

Lena walked away towards the window-door, which opened upon the lawn. It was shut, of course, and the rain had been beating against it; but that was over now. As my eyes followed her, we both saw at the same moment, a little face close to the glass. A pale, dirty, miserable little face, belonging to a ragged child apparently about

five years old. I opened the window, and asked him—very unnecessarily—what he wanted.

"Please, lady, gi' me a copper," he said, with the whine of a born and trained beggar. Lena had followed me to the window, and before I could say anything, the child looked up in her face, and said in a more natural tone :

"I'm so cold!"

In a moment she had pushed past me, and had taken his little purple hands in hers.

"So he is, poor little fellow; he's frozen, and soaked with the rain. Oh, Mrs. Singleton, mayn't I bring him in and warm him?"

I hope I shall be forgiven if I hesitated for one minute, when I thought of Susan. Susan is an excellent cook, and a good-hearted woman, but she can be so unpleasant when she is in a temper! And probably the child's mother was a thief, just waiting round the corner for a chance to get into the house.

"Where is your mother, my child?" I asked.

"Don't know," he said, pitifully. "I'm so cold." And just then he began to cough violently.

Lena waited for no permission. She gathered the dirty little creature up in her arms, and carried him straight through the drawing-room, and into the kitchen. There she sat down with him before the fire, petting and soothing him until the coughing-fit was over. I followed, and made explanations to the astonished servants.

Fortunately, Susan's good heart was uppermost this evening; and, indeed, the thin, chilled little limbs and swollen hands and feet would have moved the hardest to pity. Charlotte Stamwood had come in with me, and I turned to her for counsel, as she was well accustomed to poor children. All her nonsense was gone in a minute, and she was strictly practical.

"He looks very ill," she said; "and every minute he sits in those wet clothes is making him worse. You'd better take them off, and give him a hot bath at once, and I'll run home and fetch some things for him. There was a parcel of children's old clothes sent us yesterday, for giving away, and some of them will be sure to fit him. You can wrap him up in a blanket till I come back. Then he can be taken to the infirmary." And she departed without delay.

It was rather dismaying. A dirty little beggar, with not a rag on him that was fit to be touched with a pair of tongs, to be bathed and dressed! I thought myself a fairly charitable woman, as people go, but I own that I did not know how to set about this piece of work.

"Please let me see to him," said Lena. "You have all those people to attend to, and Susan will help me to make him warm and comfortable."

Accordingly I returned to my guests, who were a good deal amazed at Miss Graham's sudden burst of Quixotic benevolence.

"Not in the least like her, you know," said Mrs. Minton. "I

happen to know that it would have been quite a *pleasure* to her dear aunt to see her become a Sister of Charity, or something of the sort: but she never would take the least interest in the poor."

"She didn't care about being charitable to order, I suppose," snapped Lady Jacobs, who was always in a chronic state of polite hostilities with Mrs. Minton. "My dear"—to me—"I shall take myself off. I expect you will want to see what your enthusiast is doing with her waif."

This broad hint was soon taken by the rest of the company, and it was not very long before I was able to go and see how matters were progressing in the kitchen. As I entered, I suddenly remembered the scene of that day week, and the half-mad woman pacing up and down with gleaming eyes, exulting in some wild witch-like vengeance that she had helped to execute. Now she sat on a low chair, a little back from the fire, wrapped in a soft blue dressing-gown, and in her arms lay her foundling fast asleep. A half-emptied basin of bread-and-milk stood near; the poor little thing had not been able to eat much; but now his sleep was so profound that Susan's movements as she went to and fro about her work, every now and then casting a friendly glance at the little stranger—did not disturb him. Lena looked up at me with such a different expression in her dark eyes! I had not known that they could look soft and loving. "Isn't he a dear little fellow?" she said in a low voice.

Now that he was clean and comfortable, one could see some traces of childish prettiness, and there was something touching in the small pale face. I was able to assent.

"He is like my little Joso," she murmured, looking down at him again fondly. I stood watching them, and presently the child woke. He opened his eyes, and lay taking in his surroundings.

"Are you warm now, dear?" asked Lena.

"Yes," he said, decidedly. "Who are you?"

Lena hesitated. "You may call me Sister," she said.

"Sisters took care of me when my leg was bad. Sister Lucy was jolly: she always gave me lollipops when the doctors came; but Sister Jane said she mustn't. Will you give me some, too?"

"Yes, dear. I'll get you some to-morrow."

"All right. I like being here. Where's your cap?"

"I haven't one, but I can take care of you just as well without."

"Sisters always had caps," said the child, doubtfully. "What's your name?"

"Lena."

"Sister Lena, where's my little bed?"

She gathered him up in her arms, and covered him with kisses. Evidently she had in a moment adopted this little waif of the streets, who might have all sorts of embarrassing antecedents and belongings, to fill the place of her lost brother. It would be a happiness to see

her empty heart so filled and warmed, but I foresaw all sorts of perplexities. Meanwhile, the child's question was pertinent. Lena looked at me. Nobody ventured to suggest the infirmary.

"Mayn't he sleep in my bed?" she said. "He is as clean as any other child now, and I can sleep on the floor."

However, I had a little bed, which I kept for my sister's children when she brought them with her on a visit, and this I moved into Lena's room. There the little fellow, whose name proved to be Tim, was soon settled, and prepared to go to sleep again. He much astonished us by proposing to say his prayers.

"I always said my prayers to Sister Lucy," he observed simply. "I haven't forgot them one bit." And he rattled off one of his childish prayers in a high sing-song.

"Good-night, little Tim," said Lena, tucking him up.

"Good-night, Sister Lena," said little Tim, sleepily.

Of course we talked about our little guest while we were having our tea, speculated upon his history, wondered at his partial civilisation, exchanged commonplaces on the benefits of hospitals, and drifted into a discussion on sisterhoods. But what was to become of little Tim, either to-morrow or afterwards, was a question of which we carefully steered clear as long as cups and saucers and edibles restricted the conversation to conventionalities. When we went into the drawing-room, Lena sat down to the piano, and played several of the sweetest of the Lieder ohne Worte, until a sound upstairs called her away to see to her charge. After a time, she returned.

"He was awake then," she said, "and just coughed once or twice, but not nearly so badly as he did before. I am sure he is better already. He only wants food and warmth and care."

"Just what he has never had."

"He shall have them in future, then."

"My dear, how are you going to secure that?"

"I will take care of him. I have enough for both of us."

"But his mother may come back and claim him."

"It is not likely; she seems to have deserted him. And as soon as he is well I will take him back to London, and if she does come back for him, you need not give her my address."

"Why, you want to make me an accomplice in kidnapping a child from its mother!"

"Mother! She does not deserve the name. What sort of a mother can she be who leaves a little thing like that? Oh, indeed! I ought not to say a word, I know. I don't forget: no wonder you don't think me fit to have the charge of him." She broke down, and covered her face with her hands.

"My dear," I said, "I did not mean that in the least. I think you are perfectly fit to have the charge of the child, as far as care goes; my only fear would be that you might spoil him. But I do feel afraid of your setting your heart upon what may not be

possible. If the mother appears, you cannot keep the child from her. If you do keep him, it is a great question whether he will live; he is miserably fragile, and he looks as if he were at the beginning of an illness. And if you do keep him and he does live, he is likely to have inherited all sorts of vicious tendencies, which may make him only a grief to you, if you take him to your own home and heart."

"I have no home, and I thought until to-day that I had no heart," she answered sadly. "But now—oh, Mrs. Singleton, don't hinder me. It will be time enough to think of the difficulties when they come. There is no difficulty in my nursing him now; and if we hear nothing of the mother, there will be no difficulty in my taking him away with me."

"I suppose not," I said doubtfully.

"I want him so badly," she went on. "Don't you understand? It is like Joso coming back. There he was, alone and cold, like Joso; and I have taken him in, and warmed and petted him, and I can take care that he shall never want again. I can make him happy, and he shall make me happy. He shall be my little brother; you heard him call me sister?"

"Yes, dear; I knew that you liked it."

"Liked it! It is forgiveness; it is life. You told me there would be a way for me to atone. You were a prophet. Here is the way: I said I would do it, and I will."

Her eyes were bright with resolution and hope. I argued no more, but my heart was full of misgivings.

Early next morning she came to my room to ask me to go and see little Tim, who she feared was worse. He had coughed very little in the night, and now was not coughing at all, but he looked flushed and oppressed. I sent for Dr. Carfield, and was not at all surprised, when he came, to hear that the child was in the first stage of an attack of acute bronchitis, brought on by exposure acting on a weak constitution. When I asked about his chances, the doctor shook his head.

"Children have wonderful stores of vitality, and they sometimes make an unexpected fight for life; but this one doesn't look as if he had much fight in him. His best chance is his being under your roof, Mrs. Singleton. In the workhouse infirmary he would go out in two days, like the snuff of a candle."

"He shall have every care," I said.

"No doubt, no doubt. Very few people, though, would care to take in and nurse a little beggar like that."

"I am looking out for my chance of entertaining an angel unawares," I answered, not quite sure whether I was making a very poor joke or speaking the deepest truth.

Was little Tim an angel in disguise? Poor little man, he was not very angelic himself. He could not talk much, however; he was

too ill, and both breathing and speaking soon became difficult to him. Sometimes he was fretful, but generally the marvellous patience of children carried him through his restless nights and distressed days, without giving any unnecessary trouble to his nurses. And truly, he did an angel's work.

His mother never appeared, and we afterwards learned that she had been taken up for theft, soon after deserting him. Lena and I nursed him between us, she taking the heavier part of the work. It was with difficulty that I could persuade her to take food or rest ; of sleep she had little, indeed. She was jealous of my doing anything for him when she was there; and when there was nothing to be done would kneel beside the bed, gazing at him with her great eyes. In the beginning of his illness she used to tell him stories ; and I fancied that she would have sung to him, if she could have done so without anyone else hearing. He seemed fond of her, looked to her for everything, and would slide his little hand into hers, and so lie back against his pillows, half dozing, when he had an interval of rest.

But day after day, during that next week, his sufferings increased, and it was pitiful to see his struggles for breath. I longed for his release, and was thankful when it was evident that it could not be much longer delayed. He had no power to fight against illness ; strengthening food came too late ; and he sank rapidly. Lena never gave up hope. When I told her gently that he could not recover, she only answered : "He will live. He was sent to me that I might atone,"—and turned again to her tendance. It seemed as if her passionate will must keep him alive.

The hour came when she could no longer deceive herself. It was on Saturday evening, just a week after little Tim had come to us. The terrible gasping had ceased, and he lay quiet, breathing little shallow breaths now and then. Lena as usual, knelt by him, Presently his lips moved. She leaned forward to catch the sound : it was only a whisper :—"Sister."

"Yes, dear," she said eagerly. "Sister is here."

But little Tim wanted no more, from her or anyone on earth. The faint breaths grew fainter and fewer, until there was one breath which no other followed. Then I rose, and tried to draw Lena away.

It was a long time before I could induce her to leave the room, and much longer before I could soothe her into any sort of quiet. She had felt the coming of this little stray child as a kind of returning of her little brother, come back to her to be loved and cared for, and to receive her penitence and her atonement. And now her penitence seemed rebuffed, her atonement was frustrated, and she was thrown back again into the loneliness which for a time she had hoped to escape.

At last I persuaded her to go to bed, and then, from sheer exhaustion, she fell into a heavy sleep. By that time it was late, and everyone in the house was more or less worn out, too ; so having moved little Tim's bed into an empty room, and done all that could

be done for what it contained, we left the solemn little form alone, and all went to rest.

III.

SOMEWHERE in the heavy middle hours of the night, I was awoke. I knew that I had not waked of my own accord, and my mind felt round confusedly for the cause. Soon I became aware of a strange sweet sound which had been in my ears without reaching my consciousness, and somehow there darted into my mind the beautiful Arabic version of "the still small voice"—"a voice singing in silence." It was a voice—a woman's voice—singing at the dead of night in the silent house. I sat up in bed, and listened stupidly; then collecting my senses, and taking my courage with both hands, I sprang up, struck a light, hurried on dressing-gown and slippers, and went out on the lobby. There I heard the voice quite clearly, coming from downstairs. I cautiously descended, trembling with undefined terror. The voice sang on—a soft low cradle-song: it came from the drawing-room. I went to the door, shading my candle; it was ajar: there was no light within, but I could see a tall white figure moving about, and I pushed the door wide open.

I knew that I should see Lena, and it was she. She did not hear me come, and her back was toward me. She had something in her arms, which she was nursing and fondling; and she was bending her head over it, and singing her lullaby to it. To *it*? To what? She turned, and came towards me, and then I saw. May I never again see anything so awful.

Her great dull black eyes were wide open in her ghastly face, but they saw nothing; she was clothed only for sleep, but she felt no cold; and in her arms she carried little Tim. His fair head drooped over one arm, and his feet over the other; and she walked up and down, crooning her sweet song to the unhearing ears. She did not see me, or anything else, for she never moved her eyes, except when she bent her head sometimes over her burden; yet in some wonderful way she kept clear of all obstacles, and back and forward, back and forward, she moved, her bare feet noiseless on the soft carpet, and the only sound that sweet and terrible singing.

I stood, unable to speak or move, helplessly watching the monotonous pacing of the sleeping woman, as she cradled the dead child in her arms, and tried to soothe the slumber that would never be broken. At last I recovered my self-control, and forced myself to go forward, and touch her. I took her by the arm, and called her by name. She stopped singing.

"Yes," she said, in a strange, far-away voice.

"My dear, what are you doing down here?"

"I am nursing Joso. He is so cold—so cold." And she gathered the poor little body closer to her warm breast.

"Let me take him," I begged, with an inward shiver. "He is too

heavy for you." She did not seem to hear, but tried to go on with her walk.

"Give him to me," I said very distinctly.

"No," she answered, "I must warm him."

"He is cold because he is out of bed," I said. "Come and put him back into his warm bed."

"Put him to bed ——" she repeated vaguely. "Yes; I'll put him to bed."

"Come, then." And with my hand on her arm, I drew her out of the room, and guided her upstairs to the side of the cot out of which she had taken him.

I told her again to put him to bed, and she laid the poor little thing back to rest. Then she tucked it up carefully, and stooped and kissed it.

"Good-night, Joso. Joso is quite warm now."

"Yes," I said, the tears coming beyond my controlling; "he will never be cold any more. Come away, and don't wake him."

She came away quite docilely, and I locked the door, and led her back to her own room.

That was her last sight of little Tim. For seven days he had been a part of her life, and now she was to see him no more on this side of the great mystery into which he had passed. Like a storm-beaten bird, he had flown to her from the outer cold and darkness, and folded his wet and weary wings, and nestled into her bosom; but now he had spread them again for flight into brighter sunshine and purer air.

Lena was not with us when we laid him to sleep in a quiet corner of Tamston churchyard. She had been thoroughly chilled in her wanderings that night, and worn out as she was with her week of excited, unresting nursing, the effects were serious. She had an attack of influenza of the worst sort, which kept her a prisoner to her room for days, and left her as weak as a baby. It was a very good thing, I think. Bodily weakness and discomfort stifled mental pain; illness made a gap, after which she could make a fresh beginning; and all that had happened softened and opened her heart.

When she was recovering, we had many long talks, and grew to love each other very dearly. Lena came to think without bitterness of the failure of her first attempt at atonement, and to form a fairer and more unselfish purpose. She would not again try to win happiness, but only to give comfort. Little Tim had realised to her that there were hundreds of little ones so living and suffering, far more lonely and miserable than ever he had been whom she had so long and fruitlessly mourned. Her heart yearned over them: she had learnt to love again, and now she longed to gather in, and tend and love all who were destitute and uncared-for. She had not enough means to do more independently than she had proposed to do by adopting little Tim, and she shrank from making such an attempt again. After much consideration, she decided to go into training at

one of the London hospitals, and become a professional nurse, in order to give up her life to tending sick children. The experiment proved successful; she developed remarkable talent in her new vocation, and showed such a speciality for the care of the little ones that, after a shorter time than usual, she was placed in charge of a children's ward. There "Sister Lena" was a name of every-day use, but never the less sweet for that to her who had first heard it from the lips of little Tim.

Not very long afterwards she inherited an income which enabled her to give up the hospital, and take a house of her own. It was soon filled with deserted babies and neglected children, the spray thrown up by the great sea of misery which girdles our few little islands of happiness. Lena's home is one of those islands, and there her foundlings forget what neglect and desertion mean, and grow healthy and bright, or else pass peacefully to the happier Home above. There her dark eyes have lost all weird and melancholy lights and shades, and are bright with love, and watchful for homely household cares. There, too, her sweet voice is once more heard, in lullabies that have no terror in them, and gay songs in which the childish voices have learnt to join, as they cluster round her. She is a mother to them, but she always teaches them to call her "Sister."

Little Tim rests—as I said—under the shadow of our old church tower. Lena has put a cross over his grave, with the words, "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." People think these appropriate; but no one knows why above them is carved the dove with the olive-branch.

VERA SINGLETON.

EVENSONG.

Oh clear, far-deepening skies!
Full moon, and not a star;
Save, as the sunset dies,
Bright Hesperus afar.

Oh magic of the air,
Like breath of heaven divine:
Oh charm of all things fair—
Oh happy heart of mine!

The dim light dies away
From out the charmed west:
The busy life of day,
Sinks suddenly to rest;

And in the deepening calm,
Far through the twilight clear;
Sweet as an angel's psalm,
Thy tender voice I hear.

Far is thy happy home,
Yet am I near to thee;
And like dear music come
Thy words of prayer for me.

Aye, through my lonely life,
Through all its toil and care;
In stillness or in strife,
I hear thy evening prayer.

A. M. H.

IN HALF AN HOUR.

"JUST wait for us a little while! We will come back in half an hour!" Norah and Bob had said, and they had gone off into the little wood, hand-in-hand, like two children.

So Missy was left quite alone, to move herself backwards and forwards in the swing, and feeling herself, to say truth, rather left out. Why had they wanted to go off by themselves? she wondered. It was so strange of Norah, when her brother had just telegraphed to say he was coming down that afternoon to see her. How odd, too, that they should want to get away from her! Missy was not accustomed to being neglected. Hitherto she had always been first with Bob, and first with Norah, but since Norah and Bob had become acquainted, things had assumed a very different aspect, and the intense friendship which had sprung up between these two threatened to extinguish Missy altogether.

Missy did not like it, but as yet she had no comprehension of its full significance, no due appreciation of the calamity which had befallen her. At present, she was only aware that Bob preferred Norah's company to hers, and that Norah—perfidious Norah!—evidently liked Bob's society better than that of her dearest friend. It was very disagreeable, and, to put an end to the unpleasant thought, Missy called up her favourite subject of meditation, and began to weave afresh the romantic web of fancy which encircled the person of the wondrous being of the future, who was on his way to woo and win her virgin heart.

She was very young—only seventeen—and the assertion of even those few years seemed belied by her childish appearance. But she was very pretty, and she made a charming picture as she sat in the swing, in her strawberry-coloured dress and large bonnet, with her deep, serious eyes fixed on the little gate into the wood, and her red lips half-smiling as some sweet imagination passed through her mind. So, at least, thought a young man who was coming noiselessly towards her along the dahlia-bordered grass-walk, and who did not fail to mark the beauty of her profile, and the grace of her movements as she stirred herself lazily to and fro by the help of her daintily-shod foot. Advancing quietly in front of her, he lifted his hat. She was not slow to perceive who he must be.

"You are Norah's brother—you are Mr. O'Hagan," she said, simply. "Norah has gone into the wood with Bob for half an hour. Will you wait for them?"

Mr. O'Hagan had no objection to wait. He threw himself down on a garden-seat close by, and sat looking at the girl, who continued her half-unconscious motion, with an expression on her face which

betrayed a degree of shyness. She felt, indeed, that she ought to speak, but eventually it was Mr. O'Hagan who took the initiative.

"You seem delightfully situated here," he said. "Have you lived in this place always?"

"Yes; it belongs to Bob, my brother," replied Missy, briefly.

"Then you are Missy, of whom I have often heard?"

"Yes, I am Missy. And you are Norah's eldest brother, the barrister, of whom I have often heard."

"Why have Norah and your brother gone away without you?" asked Mr. O'Hagan, abruptly.

"I do not know," returned Missy.

"But you must know," said Mr. O'Hagan, in a tone of gentle authority. "Norah is your guest, and it is not usual for young ladies to go about alone with their friends' brothers."

"Norah is doing nothing unusual," cried Missy, flushing angrily, for, though she was very unhappy, she did not choose that Mr. O'Hagan should find fault. "Bob is Norah's *own* friend, and Aunt Caroline sees no harm in anything they do. They are very fond of each other."

"So it would appear," said Mr. O'Hagan, drily. He was somewhat annoyed. He had received an ambiguous letter from his sister that morning, which had made him think it advisable he should try and find out what she was doing, and now he had come to try, and she had vanished. But she had left a substitute, and to this substitute, after a moment's pause, Mr. O'Hagan turned.

"You must be very glad," he said, "that your friend and your brother are such allies. Is he your only brother?"

"Yes," replied Missy, with a profound sigh. "Bob is my only brother, and Norah is my only friend. But I am not *very* glad they are such friends. They like to play chess, and that is a game that three cannot play; and they like to drive in the dog-cart, and only two can sit in front."

"And now they like to go alone into the wood?" suggested Mr. O'Hagan.

"Yes, it is a preserve, you know, and Bob thought it would disturb the pheasants if three people went through talking; but he said he and Norah would walk along quietly, and speak very softly."

"Oh!" said Mr. O'Hagan, with a lengthened intonation.

"Why do you say *Oh* like that?" cried Missy, pettishly. She felt glad that Bob was not like Norah's brother, who was so old—thirty, at the very least, he must be—and who asked such strange questions, and made such singular ejaculations.

"Miss Missy—May I call you Miss Missy?" asked Mr. O'Hagan gravely.

"Just as you like," she said, indifferently.

"Very well then," he proceeded. "Miss Missy, I want evidence upon a certain matter. The swing is the witness-box, and you are

in the swing ; argal, you are the witness. Now, with nature looking so fair about you, with the sky so blue above you, the cool green woods waving to your right, and the gorgeous dahlias smiling to your left, you feel undoubtedly that you could not possibly speak an untruth ; hence you are committed to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Now I commence."

Missy gazed at her interlocutor with wide and astonished eyes. She checked the restless vibrations of the swing, and pressed her feet firmly on the ground, while she encircled the ropes with her arms, clasping her hands before her. She was puzzled, but not displeased. A lovelier witness, the young man thought, he had never seen.

" Miss Missy," he began, " do you know what flirting is ? "

" Yes," said Missy, promptly.

" Then define flirting."

" I did not say I could *define* it," said Missy, with a little appearance of pouting.

" Then you do *not* know what flirting is."

" Yes, I do," cried Missy. " Flirting is when two people seem to like each other very much, and to live only for each other, and then they part, and forget one another altogether."

" And their intercourse leaves no mark ? "

" No, they have been only amused."

" But suppose they have been more than amused—suppose their association *has* left a mark ? "

" Then they have been in earnest."

" And what is the result of being in earnest ? "

" It is love," said Missy, in a low, sweet voice. She glanced downwards, and was completely unaware that Mr. O'Hagan's gaze was fixed upon her, and still less was she aware that his breast was swelling with an uncalled-for indignation on her account. His was an imaginative nature, prone to leap to superlative possibilities, and something in Missy's youthfulness, beauty and naïveté, had made him jump to a possibility of the most exaggerated evil. At this moment he found himself speculating about some man who might some day be only amused with this innocent creature, while she, perchance, might be in earnest. " I would horsewhip such a fellow within an inch of his life," he said, wrathfully, in his heart. Then he suddenly remembered that, as far as he knew, there was no such man, and he smiled contemptuously at his own fantastic conceit. Moreover the present was all his own.

" What is love, Miss Missy ? " he asked, abruptly.

" Love is when the beautiful youth comes," she said, still looking away.

" And who is the beautiful youth ? " he inquired. He felt curious to know whether a young man of six or seven-and-twenty, not bad looking—Oh, by no means bad-looking—and not altogether stupid, certainly with some prospects of professional success, might be

looked upon as a beautiful youth. Perhaps a tinge of unsuspected jealousy unwittingly heightened his curiosity.

A sort of glow diffused itself over Missy's face ; her vision seemed to be lost in the dim recesses of the little chase ; her whole manner seemed to bespeak a state of ecstatic feeling.

"The beautiful youth," she said slowly and pensively, "is all glorious to behold, like the early sun in summer, or like the splendour of the apple-orchards when the fruit is ripe. He is a peerless knight clothed with dignity, and virtue, and truth, and a burning fire goes out of his heart, and consumes all iniquity as he passes by. He goes through the world like Sigurd, redressing every wrong, and the hearts of the people trust in him, and when he speaks, or even when he comes near, men and women are happier and better, and little children are gladder and holier. His locks are bright, as if the sun had kissed them, and his eyes are calm and pure, as if the stars sojourned within them. His hands are mighty, like the resistless north wind, and his feet are rapid, like the rushing of many rivers, and his heart is deep—deep like the unfathomed sea."

"And —?" uttered the young man, breathlessly. He was amazed at Missy's gush of poetic fervour, and he longed for her to continue. He knew well that in speech was danger. A word might break the spell—but a breath—a breath might compass his desire. "If I hung for it, I would kill the fellow who played her false!" he thought.

"And one day," Missy proceeded, dreamily, "one day he will come to find me. Perhaps he will come in the vernal sunshine, and thrushes and blackbirds will carol as he draws nigh, and pale shy primroses, and the fragrant cowslips, and the nodding violets, will spring around his feet as he moves, and great joy will be in his soul. Or perhaps he will come through the fields when the corn is golden, and clusters of nuts will garland his head, and rich purple plums will fill his hands, and poppies will spread a regal carpet for his feet, and gladness will be in his mien. Or perhaps he will come at dewy eve rowing over the tranquil mere, and pearls will drip from his oars, and lily-buds will follow in his wake, and he will come to shore where the forget-me-nots are bluest, and a tender peace will be upon him. And he will recognise me, and know that his destiny has arrived, and he will rejoice—rejoice. And we two shall link our hands together, and a thrill of sympathy will unite us for ever, and time will be lost in the eternity of our bliss."

She ceased, and her chin drooped, till it rested on her folded hands. He remained silent ; he was disappointed. He felt it was utterly prosaic to be a barrister—to be business-like and busy—to have briefs and clients—to be astute and practical. He could never attain the perfections of the beautiful youth. No sun would ever descend to kiss his curly hair ; no star would ever vouchsafe to abide in his merry eyes ; no flowers would ever be induced to spring

up round his trim and well-made boots. He must go on in the ordinary way, and look for no poetic termination to his career. He was hopelessly common-place—merely a barrister; there was nothing Sigurdlike about him. “But I will strangle that fellow!” he exclaimed, vindictively. He hardly knew whether he was referring to the man who, in a possible future, might be amused at Missy’s expense, or to the beautiful youth: he knew not at all that he had spoken aloud.

“What fellow? Who are you talking of?” exclaimed Missy, starting. “Are you speaking of the beautiful youth? Have I been talking of him all this time?” she cried, in an agony. “Oh! what have I done? What shall I do? I have told you my secret, and I shall never, never be happy again. Why did you draw me on to talk and tell you all about him? I never meant to tell you anything, and now you have led me on to convict myself. Aunt Caroline says barristers always make people convict themselves, and you are a barrister. You are a bad man!”

She had got out of the swing when first she began to speak; now she walked slowly away between the rows of dahlias. When she had gone half-way, however, she turned back, and Mr. O’Hagan went to meet her.

“You will please to come indoors,” she said coldly. “If Aunt Caroline happened to be out when you arrived, I dare say she has returned now.”

She seemed suddenly transformed from an elfin child into a dignified woman. In days that came after—and that came without Mr. O’Hagan being under the necessity of laying violent hands upon any other man—he recollected this little scene—the outburst of childish passion, and the instinctive womanly control which ensued—and loved to dwell upon it. He felt now as if a jury had found him guilty, but he resolved to try and say one word in his own defence.

“Miss Missy,” he began, contritely, “I only wanted to talk to you about Norah and your brother, I never meant to vex you.”

“I do not care to talk to you about people, Mr. O’Hagan,” said Missy, severely. “If you like, we can talk about the Irish Question, or the Egyptian War, or ‘Iolanthe,’ but I do not wish to talk about persons.”

“But I must learn something about my sister,” said Mr. O’Hagan.

“What about her?” asked Missy, relenting a little.

“I want to know whether she and your brother are in earnest, or if they are only amused.”

“I do not know. You had better ask Norah and my brother themselves. I do not desire to commit myself any further,” said Missy, grandly.

“Miss Missy,” said Mr. O’Hagan, humbly, and altering his line of action, “I plead guilty to your charge. I have done a mean thing, and all I can venture to say for myself is, that your conversation so

encharmed me, that I could not bear to interrupt you. Is that any extenuation in your eyes?"

She did not answer; her lips were yet tremulous, and her eyes moist, with recent agitation, but the hardness had gone out of her face. Noting this, Mr. O'Hagan pushed his advantage.

"I am covered with shame at the thought of my baseness," he went on. "But almost before I realised that you were reposing a confidence in me, the confidence was already mine. Miss Missy, I beg your pardon a thousand times. I cannot undo what is done, but perhaps it may mitigate your distress to be assured that your secret is absolutely safe with me. I shall never reveal it to a human being."

"You are very kind," she said, sorrowfully. "But it will never be the same to me again. Nobody knew—not Bob, nor Norah. It was my one fair secret, and the thought of it consoled me whenever I was sad, or alone. It was my rosy dream, which stood ever, like a tender angel, by my side, and it lulled me to sleep in the night, and brought me joy in the morning; and now ——"

"And now," said Mr. O'Hagan, gently, "though someone else knows your secret, it is someone who honours it, and would fain be like your ideal. I am not such a very bad man, Miss Missy. Don't you remember, Portia was a barrister, and she redressed a great wrong? We barristers do try to act justly, I assure you. Won't you think kindly of me, when your mind is occupied with your sweet secret?" he added, imploringly. "I have a dream too, and an unspoken secret, and when they are present with me, I shall think of you—perpetually."

"You have a dream? What is your dream like, I wonder!" said Missy, wistfully.

"My dream!" he answered. "It is of the most beautiful damsels who walks this earth: she is sweeter than Juliet, and nobler than Cordelia, more winning than Rosalind, more charming than Beatrice."

"She must be impossible," interrupted Missy, smiling, and amused in spite of herself. "*The inexpressive She*, truly!"

Mr. O'Hagan opened his lips to speak, and then checked himself. But he felt convinced that his *inexpressive She* was a far likelier possibility than Missy's beautiful youth. Nay, did she not stand before him, and was he not prepared to slay fifty men who might dare a treachery to her?

"Some day I will tell you all about her," he said, "and you shall say whether my secret be fair, and my dream bright. It shall stand or fall by your verdict. And now that I have discovered my hidden longing, will you forgive me?"

"Yes, indeed," she said, readily. She was not resentful. But she did not quite understand Mr. O'Hagan. She knew no longing with respect to the beautiful youth; she was satisfied he would come, and

she was content to wait. But this damsel, of whom Mr. O'Hagan spoke, was an evident absurdity, and perhaps this unnecessary longing was a natural sequence to an absurdity. Men were often ridiculous outside their offices and studies ; she had heard Aunt Caroline say so. However it was not unpleasant to feel that this man was less wise than herself. Besides, poor fellow ! he would never find his damsel, and she ought to be sorry for him.

They were still standing at the top of the grass-walk, and now Missy turned round.

"There are Norah and Bob coming out of the wood," she said. "See how happy they look ! Bob looks taller, or older, or prouder—I don't know what—but he seems different to me. What can it be, Mr. O'Hagan ? And Norah seems younger and prettier ! And there is something glistening on her finger—it looks like a jewelled ring—but she had no ring on this morning ! And they are talking so joyously together that they do not see us ! They look as if a fairy had given them some shining treasure. What is it, Mr. O'Hagan ? It is like a Michaelmas afternoon's dream."

"Miss Missy," said Mr. O'Hagan, oracularly, "I think Norah has met the beautiful youth, and I think Bob has realised his rosy dream, and unveiled his fair secret."

"Then is everyone alike ?" murmured Missy, regretfully. "Has everyone a fair secret and a rosy dream ?"

"Everyone, I hope—nearly everyone, I believe," said Mr. O'Hagan. "Let us go and meet them. They have not been only amused, they have been in earnest."

And the prim dahlias did not turn aside, but smiled proudly, as the two who had played their little drama amongst them, met those other two who had been unfolding sweet secrets in the wood for half an hour.



PLYMOUTH HOE.

OH, softly by the banks of Dart
 The summer breezes blow ;
 And gaily dancing past the Start
 The foam-topped ripples go—
 And nowhere upon English ground
 Such oaks and chestnuts grow,
 As where, right over Plymouth Sound,
 Stands out fair Plymouth Hoe !

The *Western Maid* was homeward bound,
 Her crew were Devon men :
 " Crowd on all sail to make the Sound,
 We're almost home again !"
 ("Twas thus I heard the captain say)
 " With the west wind on our lee,
 To-night we'll lie in Plymouth Bay
 As snug as snug can be !")

It was the autumn equinox
 That drove up Channel smart ;
 (There runs a cruel reef of rocks
 From Lizard Point to Start
 "God's sake," the older seamen said,
 "Furl sail till morning light,
 'Twere mad to take the *Western Maid*
 Across the rocks to-night !"

A creeping mist came slowly up
 And hid the land a-head ;
 "In Plymouth Bay I'm bound to sup,"
 The captain laughing said—
 Then came a shuddering, blinding shock,
 None spoke, for all could feel,
 The *Western Maid* was on the rock
 And its teeth were in her keel !

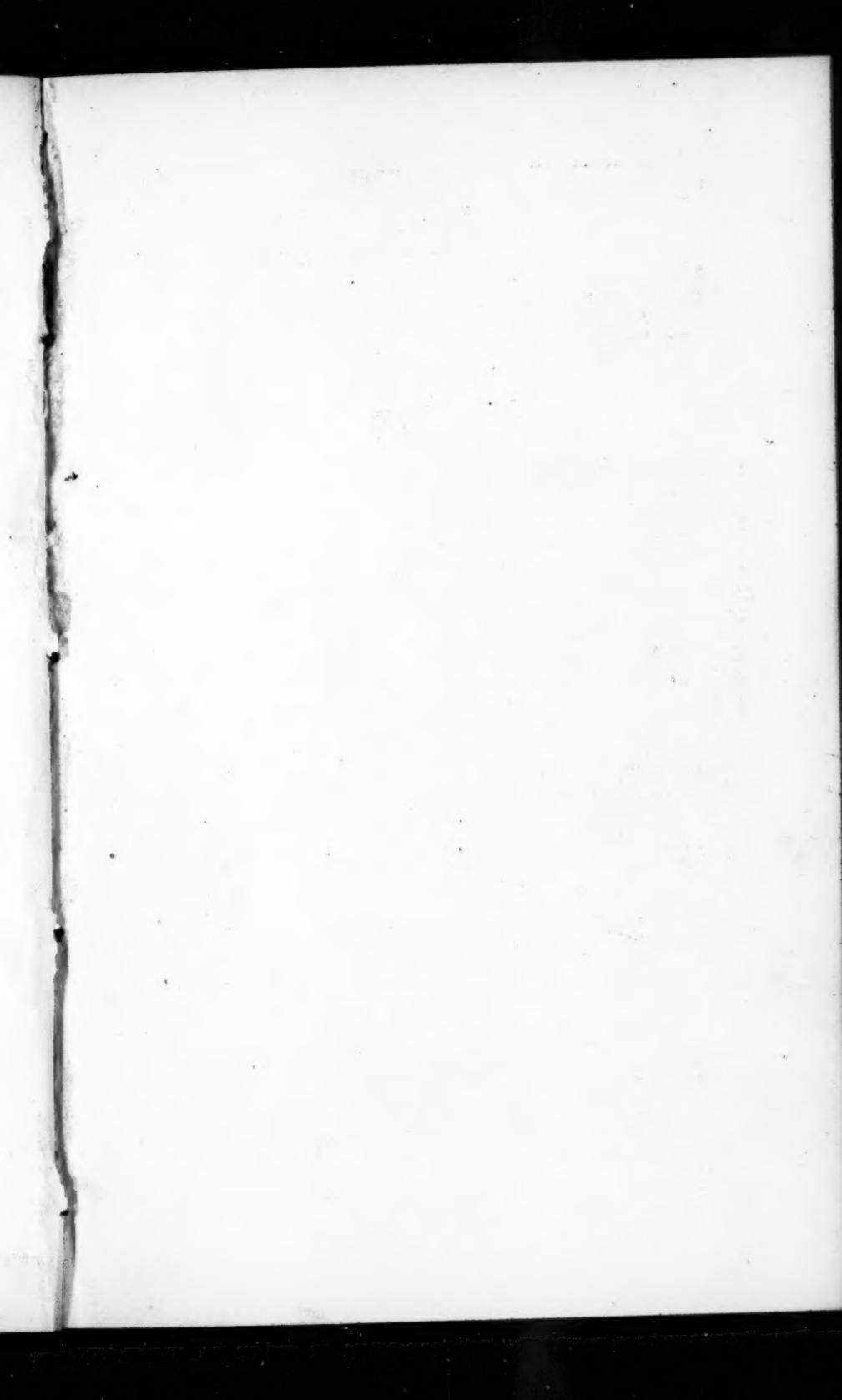
Dear Lord ! it is an awful thing
 To see a ship go down—
 With cries for help and hands that cling,
 To see brave comrades drown.
 She just reeled back, our *Western Maid*,
 One wild bound in the air,
 " May God forgive,"—the captain said,
 And then—she was not there.

(Oh, can you tell a fairer sight,
 That any land may show,
 Than the soft, blue night, when light
 by light,
 Steals out above, below ?
 The shipping lights a-swinging bright,
 And the harbour all a-glow,
 And the lights of the town as the dark
 creeps down
 That shine on Plymouth Hoe !)

I think it was a dream I had
 (I knew not night from day) :
 Once more I was a little lad
 And fished in Cawsand Bay—
 And old rough scenes of sailor life
 Went by me, strange and fleet,
 And then, I met and kissed my wife
 At home in Plymouth street !

The *Western Maid* outside the Sound,
 Was lost six years ago :
 Why I was saved when better drowned,
 I'm sure I do not know—
 Her crew of ten, all Devon men,
 Washed in at morning flow :
 For tho' we roam, we all come home,
 At last to Plymouth Hoe !

G. B. STUART.





M. ELLEN STAPLES.

R. AND E. TAYLOR.

AT THE CHURCH-DOOR THE WHOLE PARTY MET, MRS. CHANDOS-FANE GOING FORWARD
WITH A MARKED CORDIALITY.